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THE ISLES OF GREECE



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SAPPHO AND ALCÆUS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THIS Poem 'ISLES OF GREECE' which incorporates 'LESBOS' 'ANDROS,' 'LEUCADIA,' and 'CHIOS,' requires some explanation to make it intelligible. It is not so much one poem, as a collection of poems, which have been mostly founded on the solitary fragments to be seen in a weird little volume, which came into my possession, I know not how, bearing the title of 'Lyrici Græci' or Greek Lyrists; one of a series of duodecimos published in Paris in 1825. This little work contains only fragments, some of which are so charming that, like muscatel grapes shaken from the vine, they leave such a delicious flavour on the tongue, that we long to pluck, if possible, the entire bunches from which they have fallen. In vain! for on looking up we find that they have been long since gathered, and nothing remains but a few sere leaves, melancholy and only witnesses, like the arid pages of History and Criticism, to the fact of their previous existence. What is a Poet to do under these circumstances, but imagine what they might have been when full-orbed perfect compositions? An act of memory being out of the question, I could do nothing but drift before the breeze of Fancy, and weave them into

a whole ; a sort of Epic or Rhythmical Romance. Certain notices of the early state of Lesbos, and the lives of Sappho, Alcæus, Erinna, etc., and the "Tyrants" who governed, or misgoverned, the Island, are to be found in "Müller's Dorians," a learned German work. I have used, and abused, these lights, as it suited me, believing that there is nothing in the early history of the Island of Lesbos so incontrovertibly authenticated as to discredit and stultify my fanciful escapades, when, by "jibbing" occasionally, I could show off the paces of my Pegasus to greater advantage. But, upon the whole, I have been faithful to the hints afforded me.

Sappho is the title of the opening poem. History says her father's name was *Simon*. That she established in Lesbos a "Gynæceum," or female Academy, is also historical. That Alcæus, the contemporary lyric poet, was a lover of hers is highly probable from a fragment of his in the same volume. Anaktoria was a friend of hers ; and I have idealised this lady into a quasi-royal personage on the strength of her name, which signifies "queenlike." Alcæus had two brothers, Citharus (or Cicis) and Antimenidas, a soldier who is said to have engaged in the war which Nebuchadnezzar waged with the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, from 606 to 584 B.C., and longer, and to have won an ivory-hilted scimitar after slaying a gigantic champion. Sappho has been charged with dissoluteness, but a fragment of Alcæus addressed to her "*Violet-crowned, PURE (hagna)* (in which the Greek is a far more intense expression than the English translation) *sweetly-smiling Sappho ;*" and the

severity with which she reproaches her brother for his love for a courtesan, ought to be a sufficient vindication of her principles. And the fact that she was the admiration of all antiquity, surely, taken together with the above-mentioned fragment, and historical anecdote, ought to make all slander, arising probably out of confusion of character with identity of name — for there were other Sapphos beside the Poetess—light in the balance. The love of Sappho for Phaon is chiefly fabulous. It is certain, however, that the Poetess in her odes made frequent mention of a youth, to whom she gave her whole heart, while he requited her passion with cold indifference. But there is no trace whatever of her having named him. Moreover the marvellous stories of the beauty of Phaon, and the love of the Goddess Aphrodite for him, have manifestly been borrowed from the “MYTHUS OF ADONIS.” The legend of which I have taken advantage, viz. that, a boatman of Mitylene, having saved the Goddess, in the form of an old woman, from the perils of an insurrectionary mob in the city, she, grateful for the service, bestowed upon him the gift of beauty, offered a nice fairytale episode, which, after all, is not more wonderful than many of the marvels of modern (?) spiritualism, and still greater marvels which are promised us. The lover’s leap from the Leucadian rock, which Sappho is said to have taken in consequence of her unrequited love, I have preferred to represent as the effect of brain fever—which, I fancy, the ancients would have called possession by the Furies—at any rate I have considered it more in keeping with the Poetic Ideal

to do so. After her recovery she makes a voyage with her friend Anaktoria, who has the command of all felicities purchasable by wealth. It is historical, that she made this voyage to Sicily, but the cause of her flight is not given. There, in Himera, a seaport, I have made her meet the poet Stesichorus; the name by which Tisias was known, in consequence of his having established the Greek chorus on a proper footing. Stesichorus must have been a contemporary of Sappho, since he was born 632 B.C., and died 552 B.C., at the age of eighty (or, according to Lucian, died five years later at the age of eighty-five). His family had migrated from Magna Græcia and settled at Himera. I make the bare historical fact of her voyage the nucleus of all the imaginaries that precede and follow it. It is historical that Stesichorus was the author of many lovetales, *alias* old modern Greek novels, one of which was intituled "Calyce." We are told that Stesichorus, in this poetical novel, tells of the love of a virtuous maiden for a youth who despised her passion, and how that in despair she threw herself from the Leucadian rock. Now, as the effect of the leap in the story of Sappho was to *cure her* of her intolerable passion, Stesichorus could not well have known this. The fact seems to have been, that the Leucadian leap was a religious rite, belonging to the expiatory festivals of Apollo. At appointed times, criminals, selected as expiatory victims, were thrown from the rock into the sea. They were however sometimes caught at the bottom, and, if saved, were sent away from Leucadia (Santa Maura of the Ionian Islands). This

custom was applied in various ways by the poet to the description of lovers. But the parallelism between the Leucadian leap in the story of Sappho, whether regarded in the light of a poetical image evolved from the depths of her own consciousness, or metamorphosed into the phantasmagoria of temporary derangement, suggested a dramatic position, on the meeting of the Poet and Poetess; arising out of the recital by Stesichorus himself of his novel of "Calyce," followed by the Lyric Drama performed by the newly-invented Chorus, and the confusion of Sappho at hearing the secrets of her heart unlocked in her presence; while Stesichorus unconsciously relates the parallel history of unfortunate Calyce, whether real or only imaginary. Furthermore, it is historical that Sappho married a native of Andros, named Kerkolas. Of this man I have made a sort of commercial Ulysses, heroical and wise, and rich in all maritime experiences. He is a sort of clerk or foreman in the wealthy firm belonging to the father of Anaktoria, a merchant prince, at Miletus. He navigates the vessel, or rather Cleopatra-like yacht, in which they embark, and make the voyage to Sicily; and why not to Egypt, while they are about it? though this is not historical. It gives an opportunity for Sappho to see her brother Charaxus, whose *chère amie* was a native of Naucratis in Egypt. The intimacy that grows up between the noble captain and the poetess leads to a fresh and more deeply-rooted attachment, which is also mutual, if not so impassioned and imaginative. The shipwreck on the coast of Andros, the lives of the two ladies whom he saves, the subsequent prostration by sick-

ness of Kerkolas, by awakening all the feminine tenderness of the two friends in his behalf, work mightily, though as yet unconsciously, in the heart of Sappho ; and by degrees she forgets her first lovedream. The denouement comes about by his saving the life of the poetess a second time, as she is about to fall overboard by craning too far over the side of the vessel, while watching the gambols of a dolphin. Thus ends the first part. Her marriage takes place ; little Kleis is born ; and she settles down into a staid matron, still retaining the charm of songs, which delights the heart, and solaces the cares of her husband.

And now we come to Alcæus, the other great Lyrist of Lesbos. His ambitious, unstable, but generously impulsive character, got him into much trouble. The story of his life I have made to intersect that of Sappho ; first at the nuptial banquet given in honour of Citharus (his brother) and his bride, in the armoury of the house of Caicus, the father of the family, which is savagely broken in upon by the tyrant Myrsilus, a man risen from the people ; who, having committed an outrage calculated, if known, to draw upon him the wrath of the whole community, takes the initiative, and charges Alcæus and his brothers with his own crime. His death takes place the same evening, while his brain is heated and excited with wine ; his evil conscience makes him believe that he sees the ghost of his victim, and he falls from his seat, apoplexy seeming like the vengeance of the Gods. During the evening, an interview takes place between Alcæus and Sappho, Poet and Poetess, in the garden, during which, under cover of figura-

tive phraseology, the Poet desires to convey to the Poetess his love for her: and he is now the unrequited one; for she, having no heart to bestow upon him, replies in her turn figuratively. This scene is founded on two little fragments of Greek, in one of which Alcæus says: "I would tell thee something, but modesty or bashfulness hinders me." To which Sappho replies indignantly: "If thy wishes were fair and noble, shame would not cloud thine eyes." These passages are supposed to take place in the interim between the recovery of Sappho and her voyage to Sicily.

The war with Athens which follows, and many of the incidents, as related in this poem, are historical. Pittacus, made ruler of the people after the death of Myrsilus, actually slew a mighty man, named Phrynon, champion of the Athenian host—as Goliath of the Philistines—in single combat; and in the manner described in the poem, *i.e.* by casting a net over him, and then despatching him with his spear; a species of combat which was, centuries later, exhibited in the Roman Amphitheatre, the combatants being termed "Retiarii," or net-casters. The taunts of Phrynon are founded on the historical report of the parsimonious habits of Pittacus, which are alluded to in a fragment of Alcæus. It is also historical that the Lesbians were defeated in this action, and that Alcæus lost his shield, which was hung up in the temple of Hera or Juno, at Sigeium, close by the scene of the action. Afterwards I make him pass the strait in a boat; he is overtaken by the storm, wrecked on the rocks below the dwelling of Sappho, brought up insensible, and on awaking hears the voice of Pittacus

in the house (Pittacus the ubiquitous, who also very likely took refuge there 'from the tempest'). He overhears a conversation between the ruler of Lesbos and the poetess, while he is lying, as they suppose, insensible, in the adjoining chamber. In it the character of Alcæus is fairly described by Pittacus, who reminds the Poetess that he has observed, in the behaviour of Alcæus towards her, a warmth of affection which she could not well have overlooked ; and suggests that a union with her, and the influence she might exercise over him, might have the effect of concentrating his desultory energies, and make of him a perfect man and good citizen. The wounded, disconsolate poet, not only hears this, but also the denial on the part of Sappho of any such possibility, since her heart was given to another. Alas for him !—Beside this, after the withdrawal of Pittacus, he hears, to his dismay, words uttered by the poetess which, in the excited and confused state of his mind, seem to imply, not only that there is no room in her heart for him, but that it is actually given to the man whom he hates, even Pittacus himself ! And this delusion is not cleared up till many years after when they meet again in old age. But from that moment he vows vengeance. He attempts to organise a conspiracy ; is baffled by the watchfulness of the wise Pittacus, who takes him prisoner, spares his life, and forgives him. But Alcæus, in grief and shame, flies his country, and wanders about the world ; and returns in extreme old age to his native isle. Again these passages take place in the interval between the recovery of Sappho and her voyage to Sicily, etc.

The third part, properly speaking, which opens with the poem called "KLEIS, OR THE RETURN," brings the Poet and Poetess again together in extreme old age. They meet once more on the sands, where they played in childhood. The girl Kleis, who accompanies Sappho, is not the Kleis addressed in the Greek heading to the poem, but her daughter, the granddaughter of the Poetess, her own child having married and migrated to the native island of her husband. It was incumbent upon me to make away with the intermediate generation as well as I could, avoiding murder if possible, in order to bring about the final denouement of marriage between the boy who attends upon Alcæus, the grandson of his brother Antimenidas, and the granddaughter of Sappho. In the subsequent interviews between the aged minstrels, mutual confessions are made which unravel many doubts and perplexities. Alcæus relates his wanderings, beginning with Miletus, where he unexpectedly finds his brother Antimenidas, the soldier, married to the stately Anaktoria, the friend of Sappho. His brother relates to him his feats of arms, his encounter with a gigantic Ethiopian in the service of Pharaoh Necho, the fall of Carchemish or Carchesium, etc., all more or less historical. Alcæus visits Chios, birthplace of Homer, and I make him hear from one of the descendants of the Bard of the Iliad, a traditional history of the last moments of his great ancestor, which makes a canto by itself. After a life of wanderings by sea and land, he returns through Miletus homeward, finds his brother and his wife dead, the widow of their son with her two children, brother and sister.

Alcæus brings the boy to Lesbos, and he marries the granddaughter of Sappho, who, after the nuptial festivities, dies singing like the swan of fable.

It is unnecessary to say, that, in the following poems, no particularly minute attention has been paid to what is known of the biography of ancient worthies, or of the Hellenic Mythology, except in so far as they may interweave, or not interfere with the author's own fancies, feelings, and ethics—to which they are made entirely subservient.

The names of several of the contemporaries of Sappho have been furnished by Ovid.

The headings of some of the sections are free translations of the fragmentary remains of the Lyrics of Sappho and Alcæus, and have contributed more or less to the structure of a story, such as it is, and the unification of the series as an Epical whole.

SAPPHO

LESBOS

LEUKADIA

ANDROS

SAPPHO

I

The Solemn Dawn.

2

After my mother I flew like a bird.

3

In the home of the Muses 'tis bootless to mourn.

4

I loved thee, Atthis, long ago.

5

Come hither, fair-hair'd Muses, tender Graces,
Come hither to our home.

SAPPHO.

I

I SEE a face, such as a poet loves
To muse on, for its changeful spirit casts
Sweet lights and shadows o'er it, as the sun
Of April, and its showery vapours breathe
On stainless waters, whereof painters seek
To snatch the fairest moments for their own,—
Tho' vulgar eyes might look on it in vain,
And in some rude winedresser's sunburnt child

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See something nobler,—and a slender form
Not tall, nor short, but with a matchless grace,
Such as the marble art would strive to fix
For ever, and the deep dark starlit eyes
Seem searching back into the mortal past
With such an eager vision, as of old
They would have gazed thro' time into the deeps
Of the eternal ; hark ! she bids me speak
That which she utters to me ; I obey.
“I come to ye, though an immortal now,
As mortal unto mortals ; for at times
It is permitted us to look again
Into our natural life, and lift the veil
That overhangs the past ; and for the while,
Forgetful of our higher state, we seem
To live anew departed hours : oh ! then
We feel as when hope sprang within us first,
And we can revel once again in dreams
Of simple childhood, and behold the days
Of innocence, ere wisdom was—as one
Within a theatre may laugh and weep
At homely things—thought worthy to be seen
When shown to us apart from our own life
Of godlike use, and high activity ;
Or as familiar plain realities
Seem lovely in a picture : else 'twere vain
To match the noblest memories of earthlife
With the least moments of this better world.
So I can clothe myself in infancy

Once more, and make ye feel, as once I felt,
For a brief interval ; far other work
Belongs to spirits than to kindle sparks
Of the waste embers into flame again,
Save in so far as this may serve to mould
The natural heart for higher life, and wing
The mortal man for immortality.

II

Upon a breezy slope toward the sea,
An half hour's stroll beyond the city gates,
Dwelt peaceful Simon, father of our house ;
And, from the pillars of his portico,
Through a long walk of vines, that led beneath
A broad roof of the same, he look'd and saw
The purple strait dimpling with the light airs,
And cloven with smooth paths of silvery calm ;
Or, in the latter Autumn, when the leaves
Fled up the turfwalks from the rising wind,
And raced beneath the quiet peristyle,
All but a remnant, that in dying changed
To gold and Tyrian purple. He could hear
The gathering surges soar upon the wind,
And mark them frown back darklier the dark cloud,
Fleckt here and there with angry spume, that took
Glances of mirthful mockery from the sun,
Not yet subdued, but to return again
In many parting triumphs ere farewell :

The sea was softest azure, vanishing
In mists of silver, that met farther off
The fair coast of Ionia, with its hills,
And sunny towns, and temple-crested capes ;
And every gliding sail, and soundless oar
From fishing hamlet, every argosy
From proud Miletus, or from Samos, he
Might see at will, and hear the mariners' cry,
And the keel gride the sheeny grit below,
And songs as they ascended, watch the smoke
Curl from the altar-fires upon the strand
After a shipwreck, and their hands join round
In solemn dance. I see a little child
With just six summers in her eyes ; those eyes,
As radiant nights of summer, ere the mists
Of the tempestuous season veil the stars,
No dews of mortal sorrow yet have dimm'd,
And on their clear dark depths the joyous sparks
Dance like the morning light upon the sea,
That she is gazing on ; a wild-eyed child,
Strong-hearted ; and she sings unto herself,
Pausing at times, to listen to the lark
Right overhead, breasting the silver streams
Of morn, half in the April splendours drown'd :
And she, half hidden in tall grass and flowers,
Plucks them in glee, and piles them on her head ;
And plays at hide and seek with the peeping sun,
Returning laugh for laugh as he looks thro'
Her odorous bower. O happy, happy child,

With thy clear song, and thy sunlighted eyes !
Who would not love to see thee ever thus ;
And that some laughing Eros might come down,
And lift thee up into that golden isle
That swims the blue air, that thou might'st with him,
Down matin rills of sunshine, sail away
For ever ; and, untouch'd of mortal care,
With mirth, and endless music charm the Fates
To unwind their sombre shuttles, and take out
All threads of Ill ? Oh ! 'tis myself I see ;
Not in pale memories, such as to old age
On earth bring back stray shadows of its prime ;
As in the starless dark the lightnings show
Far summits for a moment, and no more ;
But in clear vision, potent to upraise
The very past itself ; for in the soul
Are pictures of all passions, thoughts, and acts ;
And every winged moment lives for ever !
But saddest sorrows follow gladdest hours,
As brightest bright the darkest shadow streams.
Whose step is that beneath the palegreen vines ?
'Tis armed Death, avenger of the Gods !
Thou may'st not see him—tho' thine eye can seek
The lark amid the sunshine—stir not thou.
The little circle kindled by thy joy,
Thine innocence and hope, shuts out that sight ;
O stir not thou, sweet child ; let him go by !
Too soon the azure-tinted hills of hope,
Muffled in mists, will turn to shapeless, grim

Worldwalls, the mighty prisonhouse of Time ;
Too soon thou wilt behold the two great gates
Of Life and Death—one like a morning vale
Flooded by sunrise ; the other as a cave,
Wherein a river, rich with many hues,
Is lost in darkness—ah ! thou still must see
Thy three young brothers, older each a year
Than each, and three fair summers than thyself,
With tear-bedabbled cheeks, and downward brows,
Pass on, and hear that ancient voice first heard
By thee—the voice of weeping—and behold
Thou weapest, and, O child, thou know'st not why.
With them thou laughest, and with them must weep ;
For gentle Simon, father of our house
Is borne to silence ; and thy yearning eyes
Will seek in vain for that familiar form,
Fond voice, and sunny smile, and tender hand,
At morn and even ; but thy mother's tears
Then first beheld are stranger to thee still.

III

Ah me ! I see again my little friends,
As first I saw them, ere discordant hopes,
Or jealous loves had sunder'd their pure souls ;
Or hot ambition had dried up their tears ;
Or frosts of pride had turn'd soft hearts to stone.
Ere merry Cydno grew a scornful thing ;
And unrequited passion—as a rose,

Rent by a tempest, for sweet-breathed leaves
Shows only thorns—left mockery on her lips,
Scorn in her eyes, and made her laugh to hear
Of sorrows like her own, which heretofore
Had drawn her pity : ere Euphranta, skill'd
To win boys' praises, moulding her red lips,
And melting her large eyes to softer fire,
By natural instinct simple-sweet, became
The beautiful tormentor of men's lives ;
And joy to see delight in others' eyes
Changed to selflove, and such delight, as feeds
On broken hearts, akin to that which tastes
A fearful exultation at the sight
Of warm blood shed : ere Anaktoria nursed
Her pride on gentle deeds and lavish boons,
And drew our hearts with unresisted cords :
Ere Atthis, soft-eyed Atthis had begun
To worship her own beauty, and to prize
No other music than the voice of praise,
Utter'd in tongues of flattery, or of song,
Or painter's art, or marble. O dear friend,
Thou wert not thus at first—like as the flower
Of richest breath may hold within its cup
The poison'd honey—Atthis, Atthis dear,
My first and chosen friend, ere thy frail heart
Heard welcome echoes in the silver tones
Of simulation, held the gilded gauds
Of falsehood truer than true love of mine,
That show'd thee to thyself, and hid no flaw

In hope to see it vanish ; hence all praise
Breathed from my lips was golden truth itself
Without alloy : I see thee once again,
As in those days when we were babes together.

IV

When she was two years old, and I was four,
With lifted finger and with warning lip,
I stood beside her cradle, and cried ' Hush !
The little one will wake ; ' whereat they laugh'd :
And at that sound she woke ; I wept ; her mother
With sudden transport caught me to her heart,
And 'mid her kisses cried : ' I would, dear child,
That little one hereafter may be thus
Faithful and true : ' when I grew a tall girl
My mother told me this ; and Atthis learnt
How early I had loved her. So we grew
Together ; and our virgin voices mix'd
Beside my mother's harp. 'Twas rare, they said,
To one advancing 'twixt the laurel boughs,
To hear us in the golden sleep of noon
Thus witch the hour with notes that ran together
Like drops of dew that touch and knit in one ;
And in short nights of summer, as we lay
Together in one bed, we sang and gazed
Up to the stars that seem'd to tremble to us,
Thrilling back the keen pulses of our song
With gushes of sweet light, and throbs of fire ;

And then, our arms twined round each other's neck,
And turning our last looks upon each other,
We fell asleep ; and sometimes started from
The selfsame dream, or murmur'd the same words.
And oft, how oft, the deathlike interval
'Twixt night and morn seem'd but a moment ; such
Was our deep rest after our holiday,
Mirth like a storm, and wearisome as pain.
That seeming moment, like enchantment, changed
The moon into the sun ; but when we saw
'Twas morning, we ran down unto the sands,
Just as we rose from sleep, with dizzy eyes,
And loose hair, and the silver ripples kiss'd
Our naked feet, ere well we were awake.
What cities built we on the sheeny shore ;
What fenced gates, and citadels, and towers,
Calling them by the great heroic names !
What rivers led we roundabout the walls
Sluiced from the sea, that to our fancies seem'd
An idle thing, for that we had not made !
Here was a Sigeium, here Scamander ; here
The crested height of windy Pergamos.
And if light airs whirl'd up the glittering sand,
And drove the shells along the shore, and made
A little tempest of fantastic shapes,
We saw helm'd cohorts, flying thro' the dust
Shot thro' with lightnings from the sunlike orbs
Of brazen shields ; or flashing of the spears
Of the relentless, swift, pursuing foe.

Ev'n in our ears the dashing of a surge
Clang'd as 'twere beaten arms and crazing wheels,
And shouts of victory! oh! how many hours
Fled with the dews in the oblivious warmth
Of pure Imagination; till the voice
Of our dear mothers from the slope above
Came chiding fondly; or a sudden wave
Cast down our little Ilions to the ground.
Sometimes we fled the sounding strand; and hid
In silent nooks, screen'd by some shadowing rocks
From torturing wind and wave; rocks that inwall'd
Smooth level floors between of finest grain.
Things lay about of marvellous device,
Crystals and corals, stones inlaid with drops
Of scarlet, and all colours fair and strange;
Shells tintured with the morning; spires and cones
Of pearl, bedight all gloriously within,
As they had just been fashion'd from the scales
Of gaudy serpents, when they cast their old,
And gird them on new armour in the spring.
Sometimes we thought we look'd on pyramids
Belted with rainbows; or we builded up
Rare pleasure-houses, all of verd and gold,
Faery domes and galleries, that might seem
Prisons for fallen stars when they come down
From heaven like outcast Gods; or tiny dwellings
Of beings, by the delicatest spells
Of whose ethereal touches might be raised
A sparkling city on a foot of earth

As fair as Athens. As the sun arose
On each new day, the sun of our glad souls
Dawn'd on some wondrous world undreamt before.
How, thro' the long long Summer afternoons,
When tasks were o'er, and we were free, we shook
The sounding portico, and inner hall
With endless laughers, as we ran along
Thro' the green light of the embowered walks
Of the hush'd gardens, dashing on each other
The fount that from a marble Sea-nymph sprang ;
Or stealing forth, the while my mother slept,
Among the myrtle vales, till set of sun,
We ran back in the twilight ; half in fear
To go astray, and half that we had stray'd.
Or Larichus came in, and with his voice,
And rougher play, storm'd us to calm ; or held us
With wonderment at his forlorn mishaps,
Wild hopes, and giddy ventures ; until eve
'Twixt peak and peak lay like a dying fire.

V

O happy days, when the delighted heart,
Like a wing'd bird, flies on from bough to bough,
From sun to shade, and finds in simple change
Unforeseen, infinite variety !
And kindles at a momentary mood—
As the eye lighting on a sunlit flint
May take it for a diamond—and so makes

A world of wonder of a single hour,
And waking clothes forlorn reality
With roselights of a dream ; and, when 'tis past,
Forgets it in a moment ; for behold
Another vision takes its place, and so
A day of very nothings is as fair
As a midsummer night with all its stars.
O hours of infancy, that seem so long
To eager hearts in solitude. To mine
For ever changing 'twixt the busy town
And breezy shores, betwixt the happy sound
Of many voices, and the flowers and birds
Of our home garden, ever were ye fill'd
With pleasures to the brim, and fled as fast
As the swift song of the free lark ; that seems
To careless ears so simple, yet is full
Of manifold sweet utterings of delight,
As the pearl'd ripples of the mountain brook,
That runs beneath it down into the sea,
With a low monotone to careless ears,
Yet with unnumber'd faery notes to them
Who hearken ! When youth came, and womanhood,
And I turn'd back to look on ye, ye seem'd
As the clear arched iris, never seen
But by the eyes far from it : but I found
My heart was not a vessel, like the rest,
No sooner fill'd than drain'd ; and only drank
From nature and companionship the drops
That were not tasteless, but as precious wine.

So what it drank it never cast away.
And when the others were as empty urns,
From mine their vacant vessels could be fill'd ;
And they came to me ; so by slow degrees
I grew a queen to them ; and they would lend
A willing ear to one who breathed to them
Thoughts, sometimes new and rare, but chiefly drawn
Out of the treasure-house of memories dear ;
All that they might have known, but flung away
With thriftless haste, and wonder'd when they found
Much they had pluck'd and scatter'd long ago.
So, when I saw that my old friends, the young,
Became my followers, I apportion'd each
Her proper function, leading Nature on
To feats of Art ; and timely counsel served
To mould their shiftless instincts into shape ;
Till growing skill begat a fervent love
For that which I had foster'd ; and a strong
Ambition to be known for something rare
And beautiful ; and their own beauty ceased
To be the idol of their thoughts ; and grace,
And comeliness of costume rather sought,
Than costliness of tissue, and the gleam
Of gold and gems. So by and by we wrought
A rustic temple to the Muses all,
Not of wrought marbles, but of summer boughs
O'erarching ; from beneath whose fragrant gloom
We pass'd into an inner space, with roof
Of pleached vines broad-leaved ; and woven so thick

Together, that the bold midsummer sun
Scarce could leap down thro' the green pampinus,
To drink at the cool fountain underneath,
That, when our converse lull'd awhile, was heard
To bubble silverly ; whose chequer'd floor
Was the cool herb, bedizen'd with its wealth
Of young anemones, and dabbled o'er
With splashes of the sunlight—when it pour'd
Thro' the rent leafage of the giant vines,
Stablish'd on aged stems, the hoary growth
Of many generations—following swift
After the sudden torrents of seawind
That freshen'd the midnight. O happy days !
That seem'd a resurrection of that life
The dawn of all, when the free heart, unchain'd
By care, and custom, and the fear of tongues,
Gather'd the springflowers, and the buds of Time ;
And wreathed fresh garlands of them, and beheld
Their own work with glad wonder ; happy days
To look back to from the dim vale of age ;
Ev'n tho' the best may seem as vanity ;
Fair colours of the morning, for ye leave
Deep in the heart, that hath outlived all hope,
An inner vision, that looks on afar
Into another being, that shall crown
With immortality the mortal past ;
A life that, jewell'd with all joys that were,
Shall radiate its own bliss more blessed still !

· VI

So, in my garden, with the birds and bees,
Thro' Spring, thro' Summer, and thro' Autumn days
Of sunshine, sat we at our pleasant tasks.
That temple of the Muses, lit by Love
Alone, could boast no marble peristyle,
No galleries, no vaulted halls, their roofs
Alive with pictured marvels, and delights.
Its stately aisle was but the central walk,
With the first violet and blue hyacinth
Strown by the Nymphs of Spring, as swiftly, softly,
As tho' they came to peep at us, and, fearing
To trouble our young dreams, crept stealthily
Away, and only stay'd a twinkling there,
To empty out the full horns on their heads.
Its rustic columns were the writhen stems
Of the old vines, round which young roses twined ;
Ev'n as our fond frail girlhood round the necks
Of loving elders ; and they led away
The eye far down unto the simple porch,
Half hid with jasmin curtains, and the cool
And silent entrance hall deserted then.
Only the busy maid stirr'd to and fro
To set the tables for the morning meal ;
A bunch or two from those near vines, when they
Were bearing, by whose dark and amber globes
The green fig like a jar of sweets o'erturn'd
Leant lazily ; sharp apples with red cheeks

Blush'd angrily, beside the lordly pear,
Which we dragg'd up from slumbering in its sweetness,
Under the rich, flame-colour'd apricot,
And peaches that had suck'd the luscious gold
Of breathless sunsets : one light cup of wine,
Which flash'd like molten topaz from the lips
Of the graved silver crock, Alcæus gave me ;
And then to work again ; and down the walks,
Arm link'd in arm, or hidden half beneath
The dark locks floating the white neck they twined,
Young girls—their voices making pleasant din
Like jingled bells of silver—ran along
To their cool seats, under the roof of leaves,
That ruffled in the seabreeze, as it oft
Gush'd up with gusty violence, brushing down
The white rose from the tall stem, that upbore
The trellis'd roof of leaves, and whirling off
The pencils, and the tablets, and the scrolls ;
And ravelling the long hair of the girls
With their own harpstrings—'twas a merry moment
To see them scuffle, and to hear them laugh,
As each one rush'd to save her morning treasure.

VII

Ofttimes the blissful Anaktoria came,
From fair Ionia where she was born,
Across the seas, attended by her sire,
To taste the Autumn in their island home,

A palace amid pleasant paradises.
Between the loftier mountains and the town
Princely it stood, upon a seaward slope
Of terraces, and spacious lawns, between
Emboss'd with bowers, sustaining from their arms
The linked vines, drooping to the sward
Their gold and purple clusters ; and at noon
Made emerald twilights, while the breeze upbore
The city murmurs, and the silver sighs
Of the smooth waters dozing in the sun.
Ofttimes we trod together the turfwalks,
While the swart countryfolk, with naked feet
And sunbrown arms, were kindling the hillside
With shout and song, and spoiling the fair land,
And swinging the piled panniers to each other,
Bleeding the red wine thro' their amber ribs.
And sire, and son, and dark-eyed daughters ran
Along the smooth green, up and down ; and stain'd
The naked feet with blood of Evan slain ;
And sang together, shaking the still air
With jubilee, and mocked at one another.
With blessing they received her, old and young,
A Goddess stepping from a winged car.
And blest was she with beauty, power, and gold.
And o'er the curl'd heads of their little ones
She bended ; and stretcht out her boonful hand.
The aged poor pray'd for her as she pass'd ;
And hoary grandsires bow'd upon their staves.
Oh ! blest was she ! as her delighted eyes,

From some high balcon diving far below,
Follow'd their nimble motions ; as the sun,
Slanting atween the broad leaves blown apart,
Lit up some merry girl's upturned face ;
Or gilded, as she fled, her flowing skirts,
And long dark hair : and, ' O my friend,' she said,
' Methinks I'd liefer be a village maid,
Free to unbind my tresses to the wind,
Sing as the lark, and like the rivulet dance,
Mine ever busy, yet delightful day
Rolling on swiftest wheels ; my sleep at night
One dark unconscious moment ; than be Queen
Of all this world ; oh ! I am sick of pomp,
And gilded lamps, and swelling songs, and breath
Of praise, like sickly odours, flattery
The incense that doth veil the world from us,
And from the glass of conscience hides ourselves ;
Leaving their spirits unapproachable,
Making their faces indistinguishable.
For Good and Ill lurk underneath the masks
Of Beauty and of Terror ; thou wilt find
Their opposites ; and manners might change places.
From Alciphron, who meets you at his gate,
Strip off that golden smile, the serpent's scale,
And hush that silver tongue ; and in its stead
Give him the woodman's reedy voice and frown.
For Alciphron's ' God bless ye ' means ' I hate ye ;'
And would not of free will that ye should gather
The crumbs beneath his table, oh ! not he.

But, under the poor woodman's bitter brows,
That cares have frozen to a constant frown,
May run the warm blood from a loving heart.
And if he hands unto a poorer brother
A cup of water only, his sad looks
And plaining voice mean 'Oh! that this were wine.'
Behold Abrocomes—for he hath wealth
And lordly station—therefore in him meet
Folly and Pride—he smiles upon poor Wit
Caseharden'd to his stings; and for revenge
He folds his robe about him, like none other;
And tells all men he is unmatchable;
And slavish echoes make him think it true.
And in his generation he is wise;
For he hath lesser fools to follow him;
Or greater, if you will. Such are the men
Who deem they sway the world, and look on us
Slight creatures as their playthings; and their scorn
Is as a brandish'd sword, that falls at once
In cruel blows, or as a razor's edge
Of subtlest glozing, and thrice-whetted words,
That strike—because unfelt—a sharper wrong.
But I have patience rather with the knave
I can unriddle and despise, than her,
The everlasting fool that is to-day,
The fool that was of old, and is to come,
Who shuts her ears, and eyes, and heart, and will,
To all the past and present: and I weep,
Ev'n while I glory I am not as they

VIII

Even Anaktoria, that majestic maid,
Whose swanlike neck above her jewell'd robe
Arose, as she her queenlike motions timed
Unto some inward melody, sometimes came
To greet me, as I sat at morn, a queen
Among the damsels, working each her task
Of love, beneath the wings of her own Muse.
Whether it was, into a costly woof
Of finest grain, to sew, with delicate hand
And ivory points, iridian hues, or forms
Of vernal leaves, or of our island flowers,
Their glory sheening thro' the dew like gems ;
Or make the creamy marble, that drinks in
The golden light, reflect the invisible
Of her own spirit, till at last there dawn'd—
Like the harmonious beauty of divine
Nature from darkness breaking—some sweet shape,
Like a young God descended to the earth ;
Delight of eyes, insuperably fair ;
Or on the burnish'd tablet to impress
Rare interchange of artful light and shade,
And trace with choicest colours the true forms
Of living fortunes, glad or terrible ;
And fix a momentary pulse of Time,
As though it were the finger of a Fate,
That froze it in its terror or its joy
In love with her own work, and throned it there

Amid immortal silence ; glorious ventures ;
Bridals, and pomps with pæans, tumults, triumphs.
Or follow Phantasy herself as she,
With winged feet, stept on o'er slope, and arch
Of rosy cloud, up to the gate of Heaven ;
And, bursting open the empyreal doors,
Show'd us the crowned Gods that know not pain.
And others in the light of their own souls
Piled up of linked utterances rare
Moulded to fullest measures, dwelling-places
For Gods and Men ; as in the sunlight rises
Out of pure ethers crested architecture,
Radiant with diamond triglyph, and with gold,
And ruby plinth, and set with gates of pearl.
Others, like spirits snatcht up from the earth,
Heard Music flow around them—as the winds,
And light of Morn, that sweep the forest floors,
Making the flowers translucent, and the stems
Dark—like a tremulous, all-sustaining sea,
That round the high capes, and the purple isles
Sends up a long, sweet, universal voice,
Heard from the mountaintops—sweet Music flow ;
Infinite voice of hope, and love, and awe ;
Uttering, with inarticulate instincts, all
The heights and depths that have no other tongue ;
And soaring Heavenward when all vision fails.
Ofttimes my brothers linger'd near, spellbound
By some young face first seen, but not forgot
More than sweet melodies heard carelessly,

But singing in the heart for years to come.
Sometimes Alcæus with his brothers came ;
And, peeping thro' the leaves, beheld us hush'd
And stooping o'er our pleasure tasks ; and spoil'd
Half-hours of industry ; and challenged us
To all our prowess in a war of mirth,
And passages of arms, which only were
Words wing'd, and fleet as arrows from the string ;
Wit striking wit, like diamond diamond,
With edge unbruised ; laughters on either hand,
Trumpets of triumph, when each side had won
Without a wound. We mark'd, the rest away,
How Antimenidas, we wonder'd why,
Follow'd them not, till Anaktoria solved
The riddle by her parting ; but disdain'd
To note it, and made light of us. We saw
That while she was he was, when she was not
He was not : but that heart, so strong and free,
At length was taken captive by the boy
She slighted ; when he came, a valiant man,
Worthy to rule a spirit such as hers.
But her disdain first wellnigh broke his heart ;
Then spurr'd him to ambition ; and his name
Rose first among the foremost of the isle
For skill and valour. So, in years to come,
When she heard of his ventures in far lands ;
The perils he affronted and o'ercame ;
The great who honour'd him, the fame he won ;
Her heart relented, and she thought again

How silence, or cold words, or haughty looks
Must well have frozen all his love for her.
So, when once more she met him suddenly—
'Twas at the feast when Myrsilus was slain—
She blush'd, but not with pride as heretofore ;
And he wax'd bold, as she grew gentle ; till
The love of rule, that made her sometimes say
In thought, or in her chamber to herself—
For this confession came from her own lips
One morning as I stood beside her chair—
'Why was I born not to be king of men,
But only a weak woman?' show'd her him,
One who had shaped in act the life she dreamt ;
And she was fain to yield herself to him,
As 'twere a captive to her better self."

APOLLO

I

From the sound of cool waters heard thro' the green boughs
Of the fruit-bearing trees,
And the rustling breeze,
Deep sleep, as a trance, down over me flows.

2

He came from heaven in purple mantle clad.

SAPPHO.

I SAID unto myself—"If I could see
The heroes of the earth pass by in arms,
And with the dust of victory on their helms ;
The Kings of Egypt and of Babylon,
The chiefs I have not seen, and shall not see,
The great in stature and renown—the strong
In counsel, and the foremost in command :
Would it not be a sight, more full of wonder
Than any pageant, pomp, or festival
Held to the Gods themselves? But if Achilles
Should stand before me in the strength of youth ;
With that blue eye, that lighten'd on the foe,
Or as he leant over the drifting manes

And glittering hoofs, spurr'd onward with the weight
Of Hector slain ; should I not turn away
From all things real to the glorious sight
Of such a phantom ? But if one should come
In sober stole, a master of those thoughts
That carry on the world, and shake us still
With echoes only ; one whose lonely heart
In ages gone was stirr'd with such a pulse,
That all the Present trembles to it still :
Should I not rise from any banquet table,
Nuptials, or triumphs, ev'n my own death-bed ;
If I could see him walking down the street,
Or catch the distant fluttering of his robe
As he pass'd off for ever ? Would not they,—
Who fill the seats at amphitheatres,
To see the lordliest of living men
Throned, and in scarlet clad, and crown'd with gold,
And hear him utter solemn words might change
The fate of nations—from the living turn
To look upon the dead, though he should come
In simplest fashion, did they only know
'Twas He who rules their spirits by his own ?
I heard an old man to my mother say—
Once on a Summer's eve, when roundabout
The air was dim, and overhead the sky
All flush'd with twilight clouds like holy isles,
Wherefrom enraptured Memories turn'd their eyes
Back on the dying Day—'I well remember,
Once when I was a very little child,

Less than thy dark-eyed maiden, I stood near,
And for a full hour look'd upon the face
Of blest Terpander' ; and I looked on his,
And in the twilight, and the mystic hour,
My fancy changed it to similitude
Of Him, the patriarch of our Song, the Bard
Holy and wise ; for sure it seem'd to me
That one, whose fortune it had been to see
The Man, who in the temple of our souls
Throned his great shadow like reality,
Himself upon his forehead must have caught
Illumination, Immortality ;
And by his looks, his gestures, and his speech
Could bring him back to life ; his living soul
Itself must needs be dower'd with half the might
Of what it had beheld ; I look'd, and look'd,
And as the dusky hues of eve grew darker,
The more the fading outline of his face
Was fashion'd by my phantasy ; his limbs
Dilated in the gloominess, and grew
As 'twere a God's, who came to visit us
In lowly weeds, but by and by would rise
And part with thunder and the rush of wings !
' Tell me what were his words,' my mother said :
And thus the old man of the elder spake ;
" Know there were others by, who bore in mind
All that he said, and they were his last words,
Else should I strive in vain to answer thee ;
But, oftentimes echoed by their reverent lips,

They grew familiar to my growing years ;
And what was first the music of a song,
And nothing more, wax'd vital ; his dark speech
The voice of an immortal in mine ears : ”
‘ Oh ! as I thought of those ’ Terpander said,
Himself the Giant of our Isle ; ‘ of those
Giants of Morn, primeval Sons of Time,
Great Vanquishers of Worlds, who for awhile
Held on with me, when I began to fly
With pure white wings unstain'd of earthly dust,
And the first strength of youth untried of ill ;
Ah me ! I cried, shall any voice again
Utter forth sounds, like those which charm'd the ears
Of Gods to listen ; who shall speak again
Like Orpheus, or divine Mæonides ?
And, as I look'd toward the shores afar
Dark in the glooming east, my fancy fill'd
The mountain woods with light ; I thought of him,
Who in the silent dawn of ages drew
A solitary glory, like the peaks
Of those same hills at morn, and in him felt
The voices of Apollo, as the leaves
And wakening blossoms tremble to his beams.
And then I thought, alas ! for mortal man.
For if the torrent of calamity,
Whate'er it be, roll over him, and drown
The Poet's voice, like thine, which evermore
Widow'd Futurity shall mourn in vain ;
Better to be a nightingale, and die

And scarce an hour had lapsed when all he said,
His solemn brows, his deep and earnest voice,
His motions and his revelations seem'd
Like memory of a dream, that cheats the eyes
Half waking to the dawn, as tho' 'twere true.
So might the grave Philemon and his spouse,
Standing beneath the viny porch, have seen
With mingled awe and wonder the grand shape
Of the Olympian, as he gather'd up
His crimson robe, and strode toward the sun
In dying light of even. I would have call'd
Unto him, and have follow'd on his steps,
Till I had seen him change his human limbs
For their divine imperishable bloom,
Who drink the cup of Hebe. The next day,
It was at sunny noontide, and I pass'd
With meditative step, and downward brow
Into the valley, and along the stream,
Mine own familiar solitude ; and now
My heart was full, and scarce the accustom'd path
Of Nature, or the throstle-haunted way,
The green banks, and the rustling poplars tuned
My soul to harmony. I thought of Him
Who, ere mine eyes had open'd to the Earth,
Was wandering there, breathing the selfsame flowers,
Listening the selfsame waters, and perchance
Moved with the selfsame phantasies and joys,
Memories, hopes, fears, and ecstasies as I.
I said 'Great Ancestor of all our thoughts,

Whose Spirit flies upon the passing hour,
And swathes me as the air ; if sometimes thou
Rememberest what thou lovedst in thy life,
This cradle of an everlasting Spring,
This pleasant isle ; hear thou, and be thy thoughts,
Thy tender hymns, and waded harmonies,
The silver voices of thy seven-string'd lyre,
Phantoms to haunt my spirit night and day ;
Like these melodious waters fringed with bowers.
May they be streams of freshness to my tongue,
Evergreen shade unto my soul, and springs
Of fancy, by whose rippings I may lie,
And slumber to their murmur, till I dream
Of beauty, and wake up at morn to sing ;
Till Poesy and Music, wed together,
Shall take the tops of Lesbos for their throne.
Their breath shall fly from off the viny hills,
Like April winds, that breathe the early rose,
And kiss the capes afar : lead thou my steps
Into the ways that thou delightedst in ;
Oh ! could I tread the turf that once hath felt
Thy footprints ; climb the mountainpeaks, and sit
In the same shadows at the selfsame hour.
Oh ! I will utter thy sweet words, until
The answering Echoes seem to me thy voice
Approving ; let my spirit be the child
Of thine, until it get her strength, and do
Feats worthy of thy honour. I could dream
Those azure peaks, that o'er the orchard tops

Wave like a charmed deluge, to thine eyes
Have mingled fear and beauty as to mine ;
Thy soul hath slumber'd on the soft deep folds
Of yon tall cloud ; and walk'd upon the winds
That rush down the high valleys, and o'erthrow,
Far out at sea, the surges in their pride.'
My soul was stirr'd ; I shed some childish tears,
Pure drops of dawn first scatter'd by the winds
That run before the day ; I sat me down,
And, weary with imagination, leant
My beating heart against the dewy green,
Pied with young lilybells, and golden disks,
And hyacinths blue ; and dappled with the lights,
That cross'd the restless shadows of the leaves
With golden stars and arrows ; while o'erhead
The rustling of the arched umbrage made
A murmur in mine ears. And so the breath
Of the hot noontide press'd mine eyelids down,
Softly as low-sung melody ; and I heard
Some finches of the thicket shoot forth notes
Of glee, like sparks ; and then they went to war ;
And their thin trebles dash'd together raised
A dust of sound ; and in the glooms above
A turtle plain'd ; and evermore the stream
Ran swiftly washing o'er the pebbly grit
That gleam'd like gems, and gurgled 'neath the banks,
And gush'd and tinkled, wooing the sweet herb ;
And with its bubbles hanging the pale necks
Of the young lilies like a chain of pearls.

So sleep came on me with so soft a foot,
As not to crush my Summer-linked thoughts.
For still before my dreaming eyes I saw
The green leaves tremble, and the sunlights glance
Their peremptory lightnings, and the turf
Mottled with shadows ; and I heard the birds
Singing upon the breeze ; and the clear stream,
With sound like silver harpstrings bubbling on.
And by my side that lovely antique lyre
Lay on the green herb ; and methought my hands
Had twined its carvedwork and trembling chords
With flowers that I had gather'd ; and I laugh'd
To hear its sound when I had muffled it
With waterlilies. Then I raised my eyes ;
But as I gaze what wonder do I see ?
The dome of leaves and branches seem to cleave
Above my head, and show the purple sky ;
And sounds, that hush'd the winds and waters, breathed
Down from an isle of winged cloud, that soar'd
Across the Sun, whose thwarted splendours dash'd
Their waves against its battlements and towers,
And, like a sea against a mountain, flung
Fell down in golden cataracts to the earth,
And struck unto the zenith ; on either hand
They drifted off in fiery tides, and onward
They floated it upon a flood of fire.
And, on the topmost peak of that bright isle,
One stood, in act to plunge into the deep
Ethereal blue ; as from a marble crag

A dizzy diver down into the sea.
His face was downward, and his ruffled hair
Lifted a little from his brows, and blown
Apart ; and, as he forward leant, he claspt
His hands o'er his right knee, while the other limb
Tiptoe behind him hung—and soon I heard
A hidden music, tender first, and sweet,
As choral voices issuing from behind
A mountain promontory ; and the streams
Of sunlight pouring thro' the enchanted vales
Seem'd each instinct with a particular tongue
Of music, and made harmony together ;
Whereof the highest tone was as the lark
In heaven, and piercing-sweet unto the ear ;
The lowest shook the centre of the isle
And thunder'd as it roll'd. And, as the bow
Hung out from heaven to earth and sevenfold bright,
Fills the enraptured eyes with wonderment,
That harmony sank down into my sense,
And satisfied my soul. And now floodtide
The music rose, and drown'd the firmament
With stormy joy ; and with the highest wave
Forth on the air he leapt ; the glorious sun
Burst out, and shatter'd into atoms all
That winged isle of cloud ; and, flaming thro'
His crimson mantle streaming on the sky,
Dazzled the sight, as when it burns the leaf
Of a translucent flower. I turn'd away,
Half blinded by the vision ; and when I raised

My eyes again he stood beside me, drooping
His arm beneath his mantle toward my brow.
He touch'd it ; and, it seem'd, a lightning spark
Ran thro' me, kindling every sense with life
Unknown till then ; till they became all ear
Unto his whisper, as he said—"The light
Which I have shed into thy heart, young child,
Is that which melts the mountain snows ; and pours them
In torrents and in rivers to the sea :
Which from the wither'd heart of Winter woos
The April bud, and in the crocus flames ;
Which, when the lark goes up to meet the day,
Burns in him, and sends forth swift messengers
In notes that thrill forever, like the beams
Of Morn they welcome ; which the nightingale
Repeats unto the moon with her swift songs,
That throb and burn like the remember'd Sun,
Which fires the forest dew and prison'd gem ;
Which, piercing the still shadows, rouses forth
The Winds, and sends them dancing o'er the earth ;
Which, in the East and West, at morn and even,
Lays flaming oceans 'twixt the earth and sky,
And sets on fire the thunderous walls of storm,
Changing them first to cities of delight,
With gates and walls and capitols of gold,
Then shattering them to blazing dust, and rolling
Their mighty ruins under floods of flame.
But in thy heart, O eager-hearted Child,
It shall draw forth another birth, and mix

Autumn and Spring and Summer into one ;
Shall make thee glad as birds, and swift as streams,
Blissful as odours, rare as rainbows, strong
As lightning, gay as morning, soft as eve ;
Wing'd as the winds that flee from isle to isle ;
And give thee, when thou wilt, the power to build
Of magic breath illumined temples, rich
As morning-colour'd mists, yet strong as Time.”
Thereat he took the seven-string'd lyre, my joy,
My passion ; not with tender loving hands,
But snatch'd it rudely ; and clashing all the chords,
And rending them asunder, he flung down
Its delicate frame unto the earth, and set
His proud foot on it—had he struck the life
Out of my heart in anger I had borne
That evil better than so sad a sight.
My tears burst forth like fountains, and I crept
Humbly up to him that had wrong'd me so.
And, in my dream, methought I strove thro' sighs,
And sobs, and passionate words, to gather up
The shatter'd framework ; and with desperate hand
Fragment to fragment joining, like a child,
Still weeping weeping ever—when I heard
A musical sweet laugh ; and there he stood
His fingers flattering the willing strings
Of a great harp, of such a glorious shape,
That, in the shock of mere astonishment,
My grief was stay'd. But when he touch'd the chords
Ascending and descending ; made them mix

Their golden undulations ; link together
Their tongues in one, give answers to each other ;
And rise, and dive, and flash o'er seas of sound,
And dance in wildest measure, whirling swiftly,
Or moving softly ; oh ! methought I saw
The airy ladder laid with suncolours
For steps ; and up and down the loveliest shapes
Of Muse, or Faun, or Oread glide thereon ;
Spirals, or even bands, or pyramids
Of young Immortals, Hebe's self atop,
Or glittering chains of spirits, hand in hand,
Up to the Sun's own doors ! " Lament no more "
He said—" I give it thee ; learn thou its uses ;
And fashion it according to the mould
Of thine own heart. No other hand save mine
Hath known its cunning ; let it answer thee ;
And from it draw sweet utterance ever new.
The simple tones of that primeval shell
Which I have shatter'd, and which thou dost mourn,
Time hath well heard, and would not hear again.
For he is hungry after new delights,
And thirsty for the scent of vernal flowers.
He toils along through endless Autumn leaves,
And spurns from under him the dust of Death,
And holds his head thro' clouds unto the East.
Youth loves to mock the fashions of the old ;
And love is prone to serve the thing it loves.
And thou, O child, so loving and so young,
Wouldst look upon a World that is no more ;

Wouldst climb the barren peaks that others clomb ;
And breathe the desert air which they have breathed ;
And sing old notes too careless of thyself.
The mockbird hath all voices but his own ;
And thou wouldst lisp quaint ditties o'er again.
What would it profit thee to be the first
Of Echoes, tho' thy tongue should live for ever ;
A thing that answers, but hath not a thought,
As lasting but as senseless as a stone ?
Look, as the Sun which rose this very morn,
Hath changed his place in heaven since yesterday ;
And ere to-morrow morn shall change again ;
And, as each month, succeeding to the last,
Gives to the year a fresh and differing flower ;
As shadows shift by day and stars by night ;
And every hour hath aspects of its own ;
The last-born life is other than the rest,
And owes its Mother Earth and Father Time
A spirit, like no other spirit known.
Awake ! forget not ! thou wilt not forget
The songs which thou hast heard ; but, until death,
Shalt utter the new music thou hast heard
This summermorn." He ceased ; and was caught up
Swiftly. Again arose that winged Isle
Against the sun ; but now its upward flight
Was from the earth ; slowly it sail'd away.
Once more He of the crimson mantle stood
Upon its snowy height ; but now one arm
Lean'd on a wondrous harp with many strings ;

The other lay upon a fold of cloud.
And roundabout him I beheld a host,
With upward-gazing eyes ; upon their brows
Circlets of fadeless leaves ; and on their breasts
Written in golden letters, like to fire,
Ancestral names of holy men. I gazed
On these illumined aspects ; first with fear,
Then with an adoration mix'd with love.
For I beheld such pity in their looks,
As on the lips of aged sires, that bend
Over a helpless newborn babe ; and faith
Moved in me ; and I yearn'd to speak to them,
And hear them speak. Rank over rank they rose ;
Until the hindmost paled unto my sight,
Like phantoms wrought of the pale cloud itself ;
And their own names upon their bosoms sign'd
Were drown'd in vapours dim. But two I saw ;
Great Homer sitting on the God's right hand ;
And underneath him at his feet was laid
He whom my soul had loved. Oh ! when I saw
That face, my fancy's idol, first, methought,
Imagination, like an oracle,
Had spoken in me ; working wondrously,
To shape a phantom out of lonely musing,
As like in my mind's eye as shadows seen
In water seem unto the face above ;
For there he was as I had painted him.
The drapery of my immaterial thought
Had fashion'd forth his raiment ; and his hair,

And reverend beard, were white as in my mind ;
And such a pious meaning on his lips
Varied with such a smile ! I clasp'd my hands,
Unto him crying ;—" Father, countryman ;
" Terpander, oh ! Terpander ; hear'st thou not
Thy Lesbian tongue ? " Again the music swell'd,
Like gusts of summer tempest ; and my voice
Was slain ; but sweeter aye and sweeter grew
The parting sound ; till once again the sun
Flooded the pale isle with its oceanlight,
And swallow'd up the vision : the last tones
Of that divine ascending harmony
Were faint as echoes rapt along the wind ;
And left dim memories, like a sweet-shaped dream
We cannot seize again, however fair,
Tro'd underfoot of the great tumult, roll'd
Through opening gates of day. I cried, " Terpander,
Terpander," and the sound of my own cry
Woke me : and lo ! the sun was in the west ;
The grove was glooming, and the evening beams,
Like golden columns fallen to the earth,
Slanted thro' tall stems of the wood behind.
I rose—and homeward turn'd 'twixt grief and joy.

PHAON

I

Like to the Gods appears that man to me.

2

Love shook me like the mountain breeze
Rushing down on the forest trees.

3

Sweet mother, I can spin no more,
Nor ply the loom as heretofore,
For love of him.

SAPPHO.

I

CAN I forget the happy happy morn
When first these eyes were blest with thee? I cried,
When age shall make my pulses slow, when Death
Shuts up my sense, and turns my heart to dust,
Its memory shall be graven on my soul
In living fire and light. O happy Morn!
O glorious memory of a matchless time!
Memory of Joy, and unexhausted Hope;
When Fancy, fresh from the Immortal Gods,
With endless rainbows hung this stormy World;

When the great pulse of Nature, beating free,
Was echoed by the living heart within
Full of delight ! No other day shall dawn
Like that ; its pure and perfect harmony—
Tho' the great Master of all Song should lift
His voice upon Olympus ; and the tongues
Of the Pierian Sisters quire accord—
Would seem as mockery to thy faithful dream,
My heart, if told in any tongue but thine ;
And faint as alalagmas of a host
Dying among the hills ! Glad was that Morn,
That Maymorn ; and the vital breezes shook,
From holts in flower and wildbrier wildernesses,
The sweet drops of an early rain, and bore them
Bickering across mine eyes ; the parting clouds
Glanced forth enamour'd lights, that momentarily
Dappled the mountainsides and airy peaks ;
And kiss'd the tender green of upland trees,
That sway'd before the warm breath of the Spring,
Seen soft yet clear in all their matin hues,
Clear to the eye, tho' soundless and afar.
And every headland, every promontory,
And towers that frown'd on every steepy isle,
And every hamlet sheening by the sea,
Made gold and azure in the fitful prime.
O happy, happy morn ! the purple deeps,
Cloven by blustering winds that blew at dawn,
Were restless still ; far off the joyous crests
Of the white surges, lightening in the sun,

Tost like the plumes of an advancing host,
And flung their spray before them ; and the voice
Of the proud waters thunder'd on the sands,
And went resounding o'er the long long shores ;
And, echoing from the caves and misty peaks,
Peal'd like an endless Pæan manifold !
And, in the pauses of the great seasong,
I heard the foam—gems seething in clear wine—
Amid the pebbles and the rose-hued shells,
Thrill like a lute with silver strings ; and die
Like whispers of the Nereids at my feet.
On such a day was Aphrodite born :
And on the ridges of the playful sea
Rose like a Queen. Her tall immortal limbs
Cast off the gleaming freshness of the deep,
Like scales of silver armour ; with one foot
She prest the prow of her enchanted pearl ;
One hand thrown back amidst her golden hair,
She dash'd the salt drops from her. And I stood
That morn upon the shore of Mytilene,
About a bowshot from the city gates ;
And felt again a little child to see
The white froth leaping o'er the sea-worn stones
Of the old walls ; under the shade I stood
Of an acacia, which a taller pine
O'ershadow'd ; and its lonely beauty crown'd
A little hill matted with flowers and thyme ;
A breezy slope that overlook'd the town,
With its long colonnades and carven founts,

Its piled temples and its pyramids,
Right thro' its clustering gardens, to the foot
Of the throned mountains on the other side.
The thunder and the lightning of the sea
Play'd underneath ; and the resounding waves
Roll'd shoreward, leaping in their morning strength,
Like lions at their gambols. As I breathed,
The morning, listening to the harmony
Of winds and waters, mingled with the song
Of that lone tree, whose lovely plumes were caught
By the seawind ; and stream'd above my head
Murmuring their fragrant sighs ; and scattering off
Their lavish flowers—I heard a shout ; and lo !
A motley rout of fishers and of slaves,
Starting from forth the shadows of the rocks
And stranded barks, and hollows of the shore,
And pouring out into the sunshine, drew
A merry swarm of children after them,
With many a wife and daughter ; and lit up
The barren coast with living hues ; and woke
The echoes of the hills.—A sail ! a sail !
And eager arms, stretch'd forth, and straining eyes,
Behind the mist of mingled sea and sky
Saw the white canvas like a little cloud.
“Canst thou see aught, mine Atthis, for thine eyes
Are swift ?” I said “I better see, to scan
Alcæus by the midnight lamp, than dive
Into the far horizon's sunny dew.”
No sooner had I said, than, from a cloud,

A sudden shadow put the sunshine out
That lay upon the waters, paving them
With streets of green, and gold, and amethyst,
And in the middle of the purple gloom
I saw the snowy sail and shining deck
Soar o'er the toppling floods. Ah ! woe is me :
Better had sickness stay'd me by the wheel
Of my fond mother ; better mighty toil
Had made me blind ; ah ! better Death had come
That very morn, than I had lived to see
That fatal bark move onward to the shore,
Rigg'd by the Fates, Love sitting at the helm !

II

Above the bare heads of the clustering crowd
Scarce could I see the hands, that reef'd the sail,
And cast the rope ashore. I heard the keel
Grate on the strand ; and then there was a hush,
After the tumult and the stir, might seem
A shadow from a cloud ; some marvel seem'd
To hold their breath, as when the temple doors
Roll back on some high festal night, and show
The glorious golden shrine. Then converse grew
Doubtful and strange, and spreading whisperingly ;
Then murmurs, waxing strong, as when the sea
Seethes with the coming breeze ; and then a cry
" 'Tis he, 'tis he ! and yet 'tis not ; I swear
It cannot be." So, from beneath the shade

Of that acacia, softly I went down,
And near'd the throng of men ; and with me went
Mine Atthis ; for these momentary acts,
That from the thoughts of others melt as fast
As the light foam of the backsliding wave
In the hot sun, or shadows from before it,
Were soon illumined by the master-thought
Lit up within me, to their smallest lines ;
Like shapes by lightning drawn upon the night.
Nearer we came, and nearer ; then I saw
An aged man come slowly up, and pass
Amid the Sundering crowd toward the sea.
A thin voice said—" I see him not, albeit
I saw him step aboard ; he parted with ye ;
Why come ye not with him ? Tell me, kind hearts,
Hath aught of evil chanced to him, my boy
My only boy ? Tell me, O mariners, where,
Where is my Phaon ?" Woeful 'twas to see
That aged man thus pleading, and unheard ;
Leaning upon his staff with rueful looks ;
And moved me to swift tears. And, when he saw
The pity in mine eyes, he turn'd to me ;
And clasp'd me by the hand. " It is his bark :
I knew it by the dolphin on the prow.
Hath any robber slain him suddenly,
Or dragon of the deep ? In bays and coves,
And by the sleepy mouths of lazy streams,
Death lurks 'mid evil weeds ; and once I knew
A serpent leap into a shepherd's mouth,

That lay agape beneath the moon ; and woke
To sleep for ever. Or haply he hath found
Some love among the isles ? For in my day,
Touching at little shady ports, and lying
To water underneath the orange bowers,
We saw lithe damsels, winding to the shore
To bathe in the cool caves ; and heard their songs
Make silver echoes, as they swam to meet
The creamy ripplets running in, and sped
Their noonday sport like Nereids ; and sometimes
In starlight dances they would cheat the hours
Till midnight, as we lay at anchor, biding
The morrow and the lading ; and there came
Some bridal by, or Summer festival,
Ringing its cymbals ; and the young girls flung
The roses from their chaplets at our men,
A laughter-hearted band of village maids,
A clustering garland of all flowers, that seem'd
From far off glancing in and out the shadows,
Like Sea-nymphs more than mortal villagers ;
And the sweet moonlight, and the shelly sands,
Made a smooth floor unto our twirling feet,
And roof'd us with clear light, that seem'd like noon,
Only more tender. Those were happy days !
But ah ! what do I say ? Would it were so ;
And nought of sorrow ; say, oh ! say me comfort.
Let it not be that he is gone before ;
And I with these grey hairs must stay and weep
On earth, when earth and life without such solace—

The sad sole joy to me—to dream of her ;
Oft as I see his mother's face in him ;
Her whom I see no more until I die—
Were worse than silence and eternity.
Oh ! the grey seas are faithless ; and the skies
Are fickle ; and the gusty mountainflaws
Lash their blue smiles to anger oversoon ;
And twice or thrice, well I remember me,
Perill'd my life when youth was mine ; and fill'd
The heart of poor fond Dora, now at rest,
With eager sighs, that kept her eyes awake
All one long winter night of wind and sea ;
Until the dawn between the lattice shone,
And show'd me to her, underneath a rock,
Not many paces from the welcome door,
Bloody and cold. Oh ! faithless are the seas !
Ah ! for these weary bones, if thou art gone,
My boy, whose love was length of days ; whose care
My daily bread ; who held my limbs and life
From parting. I was swung with the wild surf
Upon the hidden claws of cruel rocks,
Just as my cold limbs faint with lack of sleep
And nightly toil of baling out the flood,
Were helpless as a child's ; and, but that Death,
Hungry before me, with uplifted arm,
Nerved mine to one last agonizing throe,
That left me without breath upon the strand—
(Ah Heaven ! the very memory of that strife,
After these long long years, is full of pain,)—

My race had ended so—alas ! alas !
Perchance it had been best. Oh ! tell me not
Of such great sorrow ; let me hear, O friends,
If sorrow needs must be, that there is hope.
No paly flower yet blossoms in my heart
But what is rooted in his precious life.
Oh ! such a living ill were worse than death,
And to forget and sleep—forget and sleep.”

III

Vain as a sail beat back by baffling winds,
Flutter'd the hope within my heart, to still
The gathering tempest in that old man's soul.
Vain were my words of cheer ; but louder grew
The clamour, and then hush'd ; and a clear voice
Rose, as the crowd gave back on either hand.
“ Father ”—it said—“ my father, where art thou ?
Thy voice is faint, thine eyes are weak and old,
But speak, and bear thou witness to thy son.”
And in mine ears those sad and simple words
Still tremble, thro' the night of my despair,
Like notes of music that we hear in sleep,
And straightway lapse into a witching dream ;
And evermore that music, heard again,
Brings back the dream ; and, if again by night
The dream enchant us, brings the music with it.
And, 'mid the circle of their wondering eyes,
I saw a youth, as 'twere the God of Youth,

Gazing towards me, with one foot advanced,
As with the eager speed of his desire ;
The other lagging hindward, as with doubt
Stay'd, and the wildering sense of something strange ;
And the free smile upon his lips was chill'd
Half-way with anguish ; and his tearful eyes,
Half downcast and half turn'd upon the face
Of the old man, seem'd mutely questioning.
Oh ! as he stood there, with his right hand forward,
Back'd by the purple sea and one far cloud,
That either side his shoulders lay like wings,
Methought I look'd on Maia's blessed self,
Flown o'er the seas, and lighted there, to bid
The very seaweeds blossom on the sands !
Thus for a little space he stood, with eyes
That hoped and fear'd : and then that fond old man,
Curving above his staff, made haste, and near'd,
Until his dim gaze, fix'd upon the face
Of him who spake, might witness for the truth
Of that familiar voice. It was his voice,
Familiar to his sense, as was the sound
Of the low waves that woke him up at morn
Lapping the grit and shells ; as welcome to him
As the fair wind, unto whose summer kiss
They two so oft had lifted up the sail,
While the high capes and peak'd isles were red
With the unrisen sun, as with the smile
Of one a dreaming ; and the shadowy gulphs,
And mountain-shaded coves were purple dark.

Ah! sad old man, that eyes, so fond as thine,
Should cheat themselves until they cannot see;
Or waste their last light but to see in vain!
Who is it that is standing there before thee?
Not he, thy lost one, with his bronzed arms
Lean with his toil, but knotted with his strength;
Whose eye had drunk the fire of summernoons,
Though his broad breast was dusky with the sun;
With brows, which days, not years, had scored with care
A face tho' seldom sad not ofttimes merry;
As one, who saw amid the summer light
The frowns of other tempests, and could hear
In stillest calm the tongues of mighty winds.
Upon the shoulder of the youth he laid
His wavering hand; and stood a moment, smit
With overwhelming wonder as he gazed:
Then shook his head, and turn'd aside in sorrow.
That sight, like a warm sunflash on the snow,
Drew from him some few tears; and then he spake.
"Alas! it is not he, but something shaped
For men to worship, rather than a man.
Thou canst not charm me with thy golden hair;
Thy blue eye like the heavens; thy tall fair limbs,
Like marble fancies touch'd with life—so charm me,
As that I should forget the love of one,
My flesh and bone—nay not that voice of thine,
Which sounds, as tho' thy hand that shed his blood
Had stolen away his soul—without his form
Shall witch me for a moment to look on thee,

Or make me think, for all my great old age,
That my long memories, like the mountain shadows
That stream from West to East, have turn'd to doting,
And left me so unmindful of myself
As not remember him. His was a front
Not fair to look on ; oh ! but very kind ;
A hand not smooth and fine, but nerved with truth
To roughest grasp ; and he had tender tears ;
Tho' quickly dash'd away in his disdain,
As salt spray from the rocks. His eyes would fill
To hear of any evil chance befallen
The lives or fortunes of his daily friends.
And graces such as these were fitter far
To sway the hearts of men, than if his form
Were like a Parian Phoebus moved with life."
He would have parted, and his steps were turn'd
Sadly away ; when that deserted boy,
Heedless of all strange eyes, and scornful lips,
Clasping his hands together in wild grief,
First raised his woful looks to Heaven ; and then
Flung himself at the feet of that old man,
With a shrill desolate plaint, soon drown'd in tears ;
That, like the drops blown off from storm-beat flowers,
Rain'd on the ground. He cried ;—" I am not changed,
Father ; but angry Furies, 'twixt us two,
And 'twixt the present and the past, have spread
Their wings of darkness ; all my heart of old
Answers unto this voice, which still thou hearest ;
Still hearest, tho' those loving eyes are blind."

IV

His beauty, in my spirit wrought anew
By wakeful fancies toiling night and day,
Grew hourly on my sense ; and all my dreams
Flow'd round his living presence ; and great Love
Cast on his face the image in my heart,
And made him doubly fearful. Oh ! at morn
I've met him in the walks between the vines ;
Or down in dells, where torrent waters whirl'd
Thro' rocks unto the sea, where twisted boughs,
Embracing o'er the river's gulphy bed,
Made secret shade ; sudden my throbbing pulse
Wax'd full of trouble as a rising sea ;
And drown'd my coming voice, and I stood pale
And trembling, as a guilty thing reveal'd
By its own fears. Oh ! then, if but a word
Distill'd more sweetly from his tongue—a welcome
More kindly spoken than his wont—a smile
More tender than the others—I became
Transform'd, transfigured, and with mystic strength
Inform'd ; as tho' the Spirit of the Spring,
At work within me, put forth eager wings,
And clothed itself with power anew, and moved
The founts of life within me, and awoke
Pulses of bliss, that thro' my tearful eyes
Flash'd like a cloudy beam, and then were changed
To panic fears, and senseless agonies,
If that dear voice and dearer smile should light

Upon another. Then the storm came back,
Lashing the changeful deeps within ; and glooming
With tenfold cloud the sunshine of a moment.
Ah Heaven ! what nameless trances of delight,
And anguish, what swift hates, what dread suspicions
Follow'd by adoration and new love,
Fierce as the fire, that from cold drops creates
Fresh ardours, and by ruffling winds is blown
Into resistless might : my breath came quick ;
A pleasant murmur wander'd in mine ears ;
Mine eyes grew dim with joy ; back from my brow
I cast my hair ; my step grew light and free,
As tho' gay Love had stolen from his wings,
To plume my feet and lift me from the earth.
Ah ! then I was delighted and sublime :
My heart rose to mine eyes ; and idle words,
Buoyant with musical emotion, danced
Upon my lips like rapture, and leap'd forth
In melody ; plain speech began to sound
Wondrous as inspiration ; mine own voice
Seem'd in mine ear, as when the Pythoness
Feels the great Oracle begin to stir
Within her, and her natural utterance change.
Elated by his godlike smile, and fill'd
With supernatural glory, I had dared
Deeds worthy of heroic might ; and arm'd
My delicate limbs in brazen plates, and led
A helmed cohort onward, sword in hand,
And foremost scaled embattled walls ; and Death

Might have come then and robb'd me of my breath ,
But never could have quench'd the exulting smile
That play'd upon my lips. But if he frown'd ;
Oh ! if but once a momentary scorn
Jarr'd that loved voice, my spirit in me fell.
All my wild laughters and ambitious glee
Died, as a spray of early blossoms pale
Shed by a frosty wind : then, nor the sky,
Nor rivers sounding freshly, nor first flowers,
Nor teeming lawns, nor violet-breathing wind,
Nor gushing song of the new nightingale,
Nor all the pomp of the awakening Spring,
Could fetch back comfort ; nought but that same voice
Tuned to the selfsame music, all to me.

V

Oh ! wherefore was I made, but to be mock'd ;
Like some smooth ivory image on a throne,
To whom the vulgar bow the knee, and chant
With adulation ; but their noisy hymns
Cannot inform it with one spark of life ?
Nor can the glory of a thousand songs,
Echoed from hill to hill, from isle to isle ;
Nor all the incense of my worshippers
Change me to that I would desire to be,
The lowliest of the daughters of the isle,
The large-eyed laughing Lesbian girls ; that weave
Their golden voices with the lyre ; that bind

Their brows with lilies, as the crescent moon
Tufted with paly summerclouds ; or beat
The timbrels, foremost in the festal pomps
Of Aphrodite, in beauty scarce below
Divine Thalia, or Euphrosyne,
Or wild Aglaia. Lo ! the gusty sweetness,
Like hyacinth odours on a soft springmorn,
Rises and falls along the curving shores,
And mingles with the old song of the seas ;
And reaches me far off, under the shade
Of some cool rock o'ermantled with the vine,
Or thymy upland breathing in the waves ;
And brims mine eyes with tears, that are no more
Sweet, as of old, when this chain'd heart was free.
Why was I fram'd to drink into my sense
The essence of things lovely ; and to draw
Upon my faithful soul the lineaments
Of all most glorious and most beautiful,
Swiftly as spirits, that tremble o'er the face
Of stilly seas, which unseen influences
Crisp when the winds are low ? whose golden floor,
Far down beneath the liquid diamond, takes
The shadows of all things that pass above ;
The spacious summercloud, the fisher's bark ;
The image of the swimmer's downward face ;
The wildbird's plume, the dolphin's pearly scale.
Why was I doom'd to suffer in my heart
The beauty of the Universe, and feel
Powerless to bend the iron strength of Man

With that which takes me captive? O Apollo!
Why hast thou in this tender body set
This eager soul? and pour'd upon my tongue
The echoes of thine own; if I must sing
Of my discomfiture, of thy defeat;
And how one dart of Eros keener is
Than all thy golden arrows? must complain
Only of Man's proud victories over me;
And how one face can witch me more than all
Thy songs can stir my soul? that I—who oft
Have seen the great Gods with undazzled eyes
In twilight valleys, or on morning slopes
Of sunlit hills, and heard their voices speak
In melody, which, like a harpstring keen
And tender, makes the pulses of the air
To throb and burn; and then, diffused and dying
In solemn echoes, like sweet thunder, shakes
The wavering sky, and makes the air to thrill—
Daily am doom'd to faint beneath the brows
And cold blue eyes of one unhonour'd boy?
Wherefore are mine affections, finely edged
Upon the stony temper of his scorn
Thus to be jagg'd and torn? His heedless eyes,
Upon the lonely altar of my heart,
Light up the accustom'd flame at Morn and Even,
But all the flashes of my hungry thoughts
Are, in that cold oblivious bosom drown'd,
Like sudden stars that run along the sky
Of midnight, and being swallow'd up in gloom

Are quench'd and die. Oh ! there are human hearts
Within the dungeon of blind Fortune barr'd,
Fated with inexpressive agonies
To writhe and die unpitied ; else this love,
Shining thro' walls of maiden fear and pride,
Had witch'd his nature unto sympathy ;
As the hot Sun draws up the waters cold,
And of these twain are built 'twixt Heaven and Earth
Elysiums in the air—soft isles of cloud—
Sweet Fairyland ; neither too dark nor bright
Tents, where the blissful Gods may lie and dream.
The sun that trembles on an icicle
Hath power to turn it swiftly into tears.
The wildbird mates with him whose song she hears
Pleading for pity, and recks not of his plumes.
Lightning can thaw the adamant of the World.
But love, more swift than lightning, cannot melt
Hard hearts, unlike each other, though in this
Alas ! alike, that each may love in vain.
Man only, Man, King of the World, who tames
Wild creatures, and bends all things to his will
By no wise art or crafty charm, can thread
The crazy windings of Love's labyrinth,
Paven and roof'd with old perplexities,
And cobwebb'd o'er with cross-fatalities,
And darken'd with impossibilities.

VI

Say not that ye have loved, who have not been,
Like me, cast in that frail and perilous mould,
Which is at once the type of Majesty
And Desolation (sublime Phantasy,
Which sets our nature lower than the Gods,
Tho' far above the World) who have not been,
Like me, possess'd with fierier thoughts, than suit
My gentle kind ; who have not been ordain'd
To suffer and to know, beyond the heart
Of Woman ; yet to feel that all my gifts,
Though excellent, can never pay the loss
Of one that, on the aching heart of Man,
Thirsty for drops of consolation, flows
Like cool rills over desert sands ; or dew
Upon the trodden dust of public ways :
Beauty ! which won the prize in Heaven and made
The Majesty of Hera mad with envy :
Beauty ! which Fate hath stolen from my cheeks
To throne within my heart. Take back your gifts,
Dark Sisters, and restore my wasted years.
Give me great Juno's eyes, or Hebe's cheeks,
Or Venus' ivory lids, and dewy lips ;
Give me Youth's freshness, and exulting smile ;
And let me sit upon the lowly shore,
And mend a fisher's nets, or help to pile
The vintage baskets with the timely grape ;
Or drive a flock of goats into the town ;

Or whine for alms, a beggar in the sun ;
So that that fisher be my love ; the hand,
That piles the bunches, sometimes light on mine ;
The morning milk I from their udders drew
Be quaff'd by him ; or the despised coin
Flung from his hand be glowing with his touch !
Fain would I, all unmindful of renown,
Untwine my distaff, singing to myself,
Like yon poor girl, that sits beneath the porch
Of her own cot, and often smiles ; and looks
Toward the waters flush'd with gold of Even ;
And hears the seawind gambol in the leaves
Of the old vine that tents her overhead,
Fleckering her red lip and her sunny brow
With shadows cool. She hears the low westwind :
Its rustling murmur mingle with the sound
Of unseen waves, that, fretting on the sands,
And shells, and rocks beneath, make music, meet
To echo her calm thoughts, and humble hopes,
And lowly joy. Ah ! happy, happy thou.
Ev'n now thy love, returning from the field,
Will kiss thee on the cheek, and hail thee kindly ;
And fold unto his heart the softeyed boy
That at thy footstool lies—why am I thus ?

VII

Oh ! is not perfume of a wildflower sweeter
Than incense in the temples ? Are not breathings

Of hidden violets dearer than the blush
Of Summer in a garden? Is not Love
Mighty and fervent, though in homely weeds,
Better than aught without it? I have seen
Fortunate Anaktoria; her proud step
And arched brows above Junonian eyes;
Her curved crimson lip, that every day
Bathes in new nectars; her voluptuous bosom,
The sumptuous cradle of Elysian dreams.
Who bends not to her presence? Who is not
Loud in her praise? What lot so great as hers?
Sole daughter of a sire, the foremost man
Of thousands; first in riches, first in honour.
A hundred vineyards pour into his vats
Their precious blood; he sails on every sea.
He piles his pleasure-houses of strange marbles;
His walls with carved-work; his pictured roofs
Show us the Gods in Heaven! Oh! she is fair.
Yet can this proud one love? She is a bride
For Kings; the heavens have measured her perfections
By his abundance; and the happy lord
Of her delights will take the Queen o' the Isles,
Dower'd with the treasures of the land and sea.
Oh! she is fair; but can the proud one love?
Sooner a vision, spun of golden clouds,
And floating in the sky, would bow to us;
Than one, who, at the top of all this world,
And swathed in folds of services and pomp,
Moves in a mist of praise! So let her pass.

Have ye seen her who loves to kill with love
The laughing, scornful Cydno? She who turns
From hearts, that she hath poison'd with her smiles,
With looks of wonderment and innocence,
And simple tears, which make her starry eyes
Like veiled sunbeams softer than themselves ;
And make sweet Nature sweeter, saving her
For other victories and triumphant wrongs ?
Think ye that she can love? Sooner a flower
That wags i' the wind, or busy, painted fly.
Know ye not her who saith, " I love my lover ;"
And yet, to pamper her remorseless pride,
Would peril in fierce feats and bloody strife
The constant honour of the man she loves ?
And, if she saw his blood upon her hand,
Some drops she sure would shed, that she had lost
One who had served her majesty so well ;
Cruel Euphranta? Oh ! know ye Atthis,
With the sweet voice and golden hair, who loves
Her little self beyond all things but praise ;
Whom vanity unsexes ? she would frown,
If Mars should show his plume among her guests,
Dusty with battle ; or Apollo light
Among her lovers, and enchant their eyes,
Whose heart, unquiet as a racketball,
Is tost between her honour and vainglory.
And can she love? Oh ! no—I know ye all—
Your beauty like the strutting peacock's plumes
Is borne disdainfully ; your idle natures

Are busy with the gaudy World ; your thoughts
Are harsh and boastful as the peacock's cry.

VIII

Oft have I said ;—" He knows not of my pain."
Needs must I suffer patiently, and die
In silence, steadfast martyr of great Love.
The Gods will listen to a poor man's prayer ;
And dower his poverty with urns of gold,
And unremember'd gems : but yesterday,
(So runs the tale along the shore) a fisher
Whose nets and boat—his very life—ay more,
The lives of his poor children—the wild sea
Had torn and swept away one howling night—
Drew up, in borrow'd nets, (when he had pray'd
Kneeling upon the beach to Jove, his heart
Oppress'd with great despair) a carven vessel,
Fill'd to the ears with golden coins, and, under
The gold, a chain, whose links were boss'd with gems ;
And rings of pearl and twisted carkanets,
Flushing with stones, that inly seem'd to boil
With blood of Gods or drops of nectarous wine ;
Or all afire with amber flames : alas !
Why hears he not my prayer, who pray for life ?
For unrequited love is Death ! Maybe
The Gods are jealous ; for I fear that Phaon
Is shrined in a loftier place than Jove.
Therefore it is to Phaon that I pray.

He hears me not ; my prayers are merely sighs.
Ah ! sooner will a carven statue bend
Its marble ears, and open stony lips
To the pale glare of superstitious awe,
Or to the grinning of hypocrisy,
Than woman, in the silent sanctuary
Of her own heart, in deep religion bow'd
Before the King of her idolatry,
Can hope to make the cruel Idol see.
But if I die, so shall my doom be sweet.
To die in blisses at the feet of him,
For him who will not be my life ; and when
This vexed heart, compact of burning flame,
Is set among the stars, as it shall be,
Its mystic influence, shed upon the earth,
Shall cross with power the fatal beams that deal
Mischance to lovers ; and perchance shall shield
His happy Youth from pangs he dooms to me !

IX

But, in those days which dawn'd with hope and joy,
And set in darkness, where wert thou the while,
O Phantasis, O faithful friend of old ?
My harp was broken, and my voice was mute,
My soul a garden stricken in its spring
With barrenness ; my heart a stormy clime,
Thro' which the tongues of old affections seem'd
Faint and afar ; kind loves of kindred cold.

The year was dying, and the sunless days
Were coming on the earth ; but well I knew
I could not dream, as I was wont erewhile,
In the drear hours of Winter by the side
Of my own hearth, and make its warmth and light
Image to me the blissful sunny shine.
There was a time—Oh ! then I was a child—
(And sure whole ages roll'd 'twixt now and then,)
And like an innocent child, who all the day
Will wander idly, and forget his task,
To look out for the advent of some friend
Beloved dearly, whose bright face, and voice
Of merriment, will send into his heart
Oblivion of all bondage, fear, and care—
There was a time when, in the cloudy months,
And when the world might seem to suffer anguish,
I counted those dull hours of every day,
Wherein no outward beauty cheer'd my sense.
Oh ! then, what joy to shape the virgin Spring,
With living touches, more than painter's art,
In some lone sanctuary atween the hills,
Stormproof, and steep'd in odours, brimm'd with light—
Like Aphrodite dropping from her brows
The pearly waters—stepping forth at morn
From forth a sea of sunshine, lily-crown'd,
And scattering round her the half-open blooms.
What joy to mark, in visionary mood,
The black-eyed Summer, panting at all pores,
Back from his forehead cast his glittering locks,

Flowing and dark, as 'twixt the vines he runs,
At noontide, or along the champaign smooth,
To drink the tempest from the icy peaks,
And wrestle with the thunders of the hills.
What tender moments when my fancy seem'd
To look back to the parted year, and see
Slow-footed Autumn, with his teeming horn
Slung from his shoulder, ere he bade farewell,
Beam sweetly on me a last tearful smile ;
And flinging down his clusters on the ground
Dower me with all his wealth ; then flee away
Thro' the warm gold of the last sunny even.
I was not gladden'd by the nightingale's
Sweet madness ; by the rushing of the winds
Over the fresh green of the mountain oaks,
Whose freshness once seem'd breath of a new earth
And heaven ; I could not look, while Spring was new,
With eager eyes upon the pearly sheen
Of blossoms, or the first-born crimson rose,
That laugheth out King Summer's messenger.
And now the year was dying, and the last
Was shedding on the turf its breathless leaves.
Its solitary beauty—like the vain,
And melancholy smile of one, who stays
Beside the sickbed of her best beloved,
And tortures her lorn soul and aching eyes,
To image consolation, and call up
Hope in that heart that hath no hope at all,
Save death alone, herself about to die—

Moved me to tears fantastical and sweet,
In very pity for the mournful figures
Of my own brain. I pluck'd with sudden hand
That trustful flower, the last of all the year ;
And cared not if I shed its leaves away,
And lingering life it bore ; for, if it died
Within my bosom's warmth, where hope was none,
While interchanging our sad sympathies,
Methought it did not die unsatisfied.
Sudden the mist of wandering phantasies
Was rent asunder by the tyrant thought
That brook'd no neighbour ; and I fled within,
And cast me down at my dear mother's knee.
"O mother, mother, what is come to me?"
I cried, "hast thou no balm, no spell, to heal
A stricken heart, ev'n as cool mallowflowers
Once charm'd the pain out of my wounded hand?
I cannot share thy joys, or halve thy cares ;
Or sing, or speed the loom, or turn the wheel ;
Or will, or think, or do, but only feel.
Mother, sweet mother, stay me, or I die !"

EUMENIDES

Ah ! me forlorn ! ah ! doom'd to share
Every sorrow, pain, and care.

ALCÆUS.

I

ONE morning, wandering under winding rocks,
That screen'd the sun, and shadow'd the calm sea,
And feeding my fond thoughts with phantasies,
Till the unreal seem'd a treasurehouse,
Wherein to dwell apart from all this world
Was more than all the world ; a sudden turn
Brought me in sight of him, whom to behold,
Was to cast out all pictures, multiplied
By manifold imaginings, and see
The very life varied by life itself.
Then once again the trouble, as at first,
Seized me like fear. I would have turn'd, and fled.
But many stood around him ; and just then
The sunshine flooded through a cleft of rock,
And lighting up a multitude of men,
Women, and children, made their raiment burn
With many colours suddenly, as though

A painter's hand had drawn a picture there ,
And he sat with the glory on his face.
So I drew back in shadow ; and not one
Gave heed to me ; and I sat by, and mark'd,
Thro' loopholes of a drooping jessamine,
Their motions, and his countenance. One said
Unto another ;—" Was there ever aught
Like this thro' generations of the past ?
That one, of form and aspect like to him,
Should deem himself another, and that other
The son of an old fisher ?" " Hold thy peace ;"
Spoke up a crutched widow ; " know ye not
The very gods sometime have left their seats,
To dwell among us for a punishment ?
The sorrows of the blest perchance may be
A blessing to the sorrowful ; I charge ye,
Mock not, lest ye should rue it : " " If he be,"
Whisper'd another—with a laugh he hid
Under his hand—" more than a mortal man,
I know not ; but the selfsame wits, I ween,
That made him perilous to his peers above,
Have so forsook him since he came below,
As to make this part of his punishment : "
" Shame on ye," said another ; " is it strange
That one, perchance a noble youth, a son
Of some king of the isles, who seeks him now
In vain, and weeps because he cannot find,
In form, and feature, of a better race,
Should have been smit with madness, and have fled

From his own home and kindred? fairest gifts
Ofttimes are stricken with calamity,
As the high hills with lightning; for the Gods
Brook not the pride of mortals. Think ye not
That they will search for him, and find him here,
And bind him; see ye not that he is mad?
Meanwhile, if ye have gentle hearts, be kind
To one, who, if not wise, hath done no ill.
I will take counsel with our rulers here,
That they may shield him lest he come to harm.”
But when they heard these words some fled away
Swiftly, but they were children; mothers press’d
Their babes more fondly, and went softly; some,
Whom fear made cruel, would have wreak’d themselves
In scorn or wrong; but others drew them back.
But most were they who, without love or fear,
Had gaped their full, and now went by together;
Lest by some chance, they knew not what, their hands,
Too listless to be lifted up for ill,
Might yet be wearied with some work of good.

II

When all were parted I came near to him:
And question’d him with such a feigned voice,
As might an actress, mocking airs of pride,
Although her heart was all humility.
I thought so; haply I deceived myself.
But, if he loved me not, his mood might seem

To a bystander more akin to love
Than mine ; and for the time our parts were changed.
For with a quick and eager gratitude
He seized my hand, and prest it to his lips,
“ Lady, I thank thee from my heart,” he cried,
“ For the first words that tell me there is one
Of my own land, who will not deem my truth
A lie, my poverty a cause for crime ;
My sorrow causeless, even tho’ my own
Beloved father—oh ! I know not why—
Disowns me, clothed as heretofore, and raves,
And curses me for my own murderer :
So that I think that all I meet are mad.
For well I know I am not mad myself ;
Nor any prince fled from afar, but he,
Who, but a few days since, was known to all,
And loved by all ; and yet I am not changed,
Except some spell have wrought a change in me,
Or in the eyes of others who look on me.
Alas ! was ever lot so strange as mine,
Was ever fate so cruel ?” When he ceased,
I could not answer him ; for had I seen
This man before, or mark’d if I had seen ?
So if he were not mad, as they had said,
And seeming reason but a madman’s wile,
Then was I mad for loving a king’s son,
So far above me, or one so far below
As him, whose hands but now were red with blood !
“ Tell me,” I said, “ how fared it with thee, friend,

The morn of thy last parting? for, it seems,
Things stranger than the strangest we have heard
Befell the interval 'twixt now and then,
To make a stranger of thee." Then he said ;—
"Lady, it was the morning of that day
They slew Melanchrus ; in the bays and coves
The barks lay without hands ; the unpeopled shores
Were silent, but the streets were thronging fast ;
And from the centre of the citadel
The wind brought down the tumult, and I thought
To leap ashore, and lend my arm to theirs,
Who shouted for the people ; but the wind
Was favourable, and my father's voice
Still sounding in my ears ; for he was chafed
That baffling airs had held me here so long.
And then I thought a needy mariner,
Striving amid the busy citizens,
Is but a foolish fish that gasps in air,
And cannot help himself ; why should he tempt
The earthquake, who is only weatherwise ;
As though his skill upon the tossing sea
Would bear him safely thro' the tumbling towers?
So that I put vain thoughts away, and turn'd
To hoist sail and unmoor. Just then I heard
A faint voice, and an aged form and veil'd
Stood, beckoning like a spectre, on the strand.
She had been tall in youth ; but now she seem'd
To lean the sorrows of an hundred years
Upon her staff ; she shook with her great age.

'Twas pity to behold her in that plight.
'The routed mob,'—she shriek'd,—'half blind with fear
Are flying from the wrath of the chief men.
A moment more, and they had trod me down.
Save me, my son ; there is no help on shore ;
And I shall bless thee ; I am of the Isles ;
Bear me along with thee, and set me down.'
'Mother, I am for Imbros ; step aboard,'
I cried—and raised her in my arms for speed
Lest she should trip and fall ; but in my hands
Light as a little dust was that grey form ;
And all those mortal sorrows as thin air ;
So that I marvell'd. But no sooner she
Had set her foot upon the deck, than all
The rabble rout with clamours, and with dust,
Pour'd down upon the shores ; and from the fort
We heard the trumpets blowing ; and I saw
Aghast new banners flying ; and I knew
That I most wisely had forgone the fray ;
For the great lords had won : but now I breathed
Freely the fresh seas, and the winged air.
O Heaven ! how blessed was that thought ; how sweet ;
While many, for the deeds they did that day,
Lay in a breathless dungeon dark and cold.
No sooner was the canvas spread, than all
The winds, that had forgotten us so long,
Came down at once ; off in midsea the crests
Of the tall surges lighten'd ; and the showers
Dash'd from the deep made rainbows. On we flow'd,

We clear'd the harbour swift as hope ; and stood
Out for the main, as tho' blind Fortune sat
In that weird shape before me ; and I sang
In very glee, to witness how we sail'd.
The yellow shores, the temples on the steeps,
Sunk as in some swift dream ; and all the hills
Of Lesbos vanish'd as a morning cloud.
And still I sang, and still we sail'd away
From morn to noon, from afternoon to even ;
And halcyons came and warbled on the mast ;
And wondrous fishes glanced from out the blue,
Dizen'd with pearl and gold ; and gracious shapes
Seem'd leaning o'er us from the summer clouds.
Oh ! we sail'd rarely ! but that hooded form
Sat cowering by the mast, and spake no more ;
Till I grew half afraid ; and, when the moon
Rose o'er the waters, I grew silent too,
Thinking 'twas Death that I had brought aboard.
At last, betwixt the midnight and the morn,
Lying becalm'd under the dusky lee
Of a forsaken islet steep with rocks,
And weary with my toil, I lay and slept.
And in my dreams we still were sailing on,
Thro' waters, purple with the setting sun,
'Twixt rosy isles that waved above the deep
Deep summer woods tassel'd with flowers, that made
The quiet bays beneath them rich as floors
Paven with gems ; and, in the lawn shade
Of gardenslopes, I heard sweet citherns smit ;

And mark'd soft eyes peep forth thro' myrtleboughs.
Then, as I slept, methought I look'd upon
The rocky islet ; but its aspect changed ;
As tho' midwinter in a moment sprang
Into the youth of summer ; and I saw
Many a green way, that wander'd into deeps
Of emerald twilight ; and I lighted down,
And follow'd the first alley that I found.
And, as I went, it widen'd into lawns,
And gardens, cluster'd with such balmy trees,
As fill'd the air with odours ; but no sense
Of mortal man drew in such happy breath
As flow'd around me, filling me with bliss
Sweeter than any drawn from golden drops
Of sweetest vineyards : and about me rang
The mingled notes of songbirds, to the ear
Wafting delights, that seem'd to breathe in sound
The spirits of the flowers. I drank in life ;
My heart was jocund and my step was light.
When, in a moment, from beneath a shade
Of arching myrtles came forth one, who seem'd
The queen of all that pleasance ; for the light
Of her great beauty glorified the place.
And yet, methought, as I look'd on her face,
I still beheld the aged woman there,
Though every form and feature had put on
Divinest youth ; and then I heard her voice.
'The Immortals have no need of mortal aid ;'
She said ; 'and if this morn I seem'd to fly

In fear from earthly terrors, dream not, boy,
Thy hand hath saved one whom no hand could harm.
But not the less the Gods are bountiful ;
And bless the giver though his gift be nought.
Love is the best gift that thy world can yield.
Beauty should be its garment ; and when Time
Hath reap'd the harvest of the evil earth,
The thoughts of men shall mould their outward form ;
And, love being in the heart as in the eye,
And interchanged by twain who love each other,
Not given in vain to unrequiting souls,
All loves shall be concordant, as the sweet
Concert of bass and treble instruments.
And infants shall inherit in their souls
Ancestral harmonies ; and the pure thought,
And the kind heart be pictured in the face,
Material symbol of the soul itself ;
Like and unlike, yet answering to each other,
As Nature to the Supernatural,
O mortal, but the days are not yet come
For such a change ; but I can make thee such.
Be thou, as thou wouldst be, if that great day
Had dawn'd upon the world ; be thou, O boy,
The visible semblance of thine inmost soul.'
Lady, I know not if I seem to thee
To utter speech of reason ; but I know
These are the words she spoke, the very same.
For, by recalling them continually,
Sometimes in silent thought, sometimes in whispers,

Sometimes aloud, I have ingrain'd them so
In memory, thro' my vain desire to spell
The riddle of them, that I can no more
Forget them, than the sound of my own tongue."
He ceased, and grief, and wonder, mix'd with fear,
Gat hold of me ; I could not answer him.
For had I ever seen this man, before
He sail'd away, or mark'd if I had seen ?
Alas ! he must be mad as they had said,
Then was I madder still for loving him
Who loved not me : but could I fight with doom,
More than a withered leaf with mountain winds,
More than a dewdrop with the cataract ?

III

One morn there was a cry along the shore.
A shatter'd bark had drifted on a rock
With shiver'd mast and rudderless ; and one
Said 'twas a fisher's caught by a northwind,
And emptied of its crew ; another knew
It was a Samian bark, and brought us wares,
And wines in change for ours ; a broken jar
Lay on the deck ; hard by a fisher's cap,
Discolour'd by the salt seas ; but a third
Cried : " Mark ye not the dolphin on the prow ?
Ah ! now I know, 'tis his ; the youth who sail'd
A few months past, and vanish'd ; but instead
One brought it back who bore the selfsame name,

Or stole it ; one as like a fisherboy,
As Hermes to a helot,—for his face
And form seem'd more than mortal ; yet he wept
Thus to be held a stranger ; for the old man,
The sire of him ye wot of, cast him off,
And charged him with the murder of his son,
And died a few days after. And this youth
Wander'd in solitary walks, and show'd
A woeful aspect for a week or two.
Then on a certain morning he came down,
And stood among us—'twas a stormy time—
And thus he spoke, 'O friends, I have lost all
'Tis best to love ; the love of them I loved,
Who tell me, though I know myself the same
In heart and mind, that I am strange to them.
If it be so, I know not by what arts
I have been charm'd ; but I remember me
The last sad voyage was not made alone.
But one went with me, who had fled that morn
From the oncoming crowd of evil men,
And waving swords, and dust, and trampling steeds.
For on that very day the city rose
In arms, and slew Melanchrus—and she seem'd
An aged woman of an hundred years ;
Doubtless a sorceress, and I knew it not ;
And crying, 'save me,' as she stepped aboard.
My boat sped like an arrow from a bow,
Tho' the light winds were scarce enough that morn
To bend the sail, or yet to curl the sea.

The shore fled from me swiftly ; all the isle,
Its woods, and hills, and hamlets, shrank away,
Tho' she seem'd in a slumber : but time fails
To tell ye of the rest. Still this I know,
That sleep came o'er me ; and when I awoke,
I was alone : and now I part again.
If not for ever, I shall bring him back ;
Tell the old man, the son that he hath lost.
For I shall sail, and seek, until I find
The holiest shrine amid the many isles.
And if there be an eye to see, an ear
To hearken to the guiltless, I shall be
Uncharm'd of evil magic, or shall die ! ”
Then spake a fourth man, who had join'd the rest :—
“ And now 'tis certain that he is no more.
For last night's gathering tempest into port
Brought many barks, scudding before the wind.
The captain of the last beheld this boat
Far in midsea ; against the dying light
One stood upon the deck with streaming hair,
And outstretch'd arms ; and the last sunflash fired
A mountain wave that curl'd o'er it, and seem'd
A purple dragon with a golden crest.
I heard a shriek ; and, when the sea recoil'd,
He was not ; but the vessel drifted on,
And here behold it stranded on the rocks.”
I heard the tale, as one upon a rock
Sunder'd from friends, and kin, alone, by night,
Hears the hoarse voices of the threatful waves

Rising each moment higher, higher, higher,
And knows that they will kill him ; and I said ;—
“ My life is dead, for he, my love, is lost ;
Love better than the life where it is not.
Drown'd, drown'd ; the brightest star cast down, and
quench'd

In the cold seas for ever, and for ever !
We two shall never meet again : he lies
Where I may never follow him alive.
What matter ? Better be with him below,
In the still deeps, than be as I am now,
A surge upon the surface, lash'd and torn
By one unceasing torment.” And I fled,
I cared not whither ; but for a brief space,
So bright was his blest image in my heart,
I could not deem it bloodless ; and I laugh'd
At the impossible. There came a change,
When that throned thought, that bliss, my daily sun,
Was taken from my life ; great darkness fell
One day upon me as I sat alone.
The finches, singing in the garden boughs,
Began to shrill, as tho' their little pipes
Were changed to brass, and let the northwind through.
The wind, that just before was flowing soft
Over the whispering myrtles, seem'd to howl,
And scream, as tho' it rush'd down all at once,
Thro' rifts and crannies of old battle towers,
Splinter'd with lightnings for a thousand years.
The flowers, that waded their crimson and their gold

From the green plots without, began to burn,
Like subtle fires ascending from the earth.
The sunlit fountain in the centre rose
As one vast roaring flame ; the summerclouds
Drifted like smokewreaths from a world on fire,
About to infold me ; then I rose, and cried
To the Gods to snatch me from it ; and I heard
Laughter, like an infernal triumph, burst
From underneath the earth. And then a voice
Shouted in mine ear ;—“ What ! wouldst thou stay
Till all the earth is, as thy scorched heart,
A dwelling for the Furies ? Up ! and fly,
While there is time.” And then the rampant flame
Seem'd to divide before me ; and I flew,
Swift as a wither'd leaf, or bird caught off
Along a stream of wind ; again the fire
Closed up behind, and follow'd after me
Like rolling thunder. Once again I heard
That voice, “ the sea ! the sea ! ” and, swift as thought,
I stood upon a high, grey, desert plain,
Scatter'd with rocks, and blown upon by winds
Out of the purple deeps, that lay hard by,
Rolling in monstrous surges far below,
So far, no sound came up ; till wind and flame
Lull'd for a moment whispering eagerly.
There was no time for thought : the flooding fire
Tower'd o'er the steep edge of the wilderness ;
And cast a bloodred on the quaking seas.
Then, with a mighty voice, that peal'd above

The thundering flames, the waters, and the winds,
And in a moment seem'd to strike the stars,
So that they shudder'd: "I have made my choice,"
I cried, "lost love, to sleep with thee, with thee;
Down in the still abyss, and not to burn."
The wind and fire were hush'd, and nothing heard
But hungry waters. "Welcome, doom," I cried,
And on a lightning-flash, that show'd me all
The dreadful ocean under, I leapt down!
Sudden around me there was a great peace.
And, thro' the azure waters, I could see
Arches of pearl and coral flourish'd o'er
By large seafflowers, that droop'd, and intertwined
Their clusters. Far within them I beheld
Walls of a city sheening with the hues
Of rainbow-tinted shells; and thro' great gates,
Pillar'd on either hand with lustrous shafts
Of opal, and of agate, flow'd a band
Of fair seadaughters; and a low, sweet coil
Came faintly thro' the waters, like the sound
Of a clear bell, whose undulations drown
In baffling winds, then rise again; and pulsed
The seagreen element, that seem'd as dim
As vernal dales by moonlight. As I lay
Entranced, and moveless, they came near to me,
And look'd upon me; and I heard one say;—
"It is a daughter of the upper world;
Whose sorrow is such as we never know.
For love there is but sorrow; since the time

That Aphrodite from among us fled,
And took away the earth's primeval peace ;
Peace only perfect here : and I have heard
Her hapless tale from many a landnymph's tongue,
Whisper'd to cavern'd echoes, listening,
Between the low sounds of the rippling wave,
To voices of that world, what time I lay
On golden sands, basking in the slant beams
Of sinking suns, just as they touch the edge
Of our blue sea : her lover is with us ;
She thought him dead, but she shall meet him here."

IV

Then in a moment living motion ceased ;
And mere oblivion swallow'd up my soul.
For countless ages, as it seem'd, I lay
In outer darkness ; ever in mine ears
The murmur of the waters. A dim light
Dawn'd on me first ; and then a low sweet voice.
It was the sunset hour when I awoke.
Was I drawn up from the great deep again ?
Was I awaken'd to another world ?
Or born again to the old waste of woe ?
Was that my mother, bending o'er my face,
With pale lips and with earnest eyes ? I sigh'd
A sigh, made up of many mingled moods,
Half hopeless memory, half infantine hope
After sad resignation, of sweet peace,

That peace that best a mother's voice can breathe.
And as I lay, through all those silent days,
'Twi'xt life and death, the past came back to me,
As a faint twilight when the sun is set,
By little and by little ; but all moods
Were vanquish'd by mere wonder that I lived.
Had I not rush'd upon the fatal steep,
Pursued by fire, and down into the sea,
And certain death? Had I not lain in death
And the abyss for æons? Could the dead
Live other lives? Could I be born again?
But she was there, my mother ; then 'twas I,
The same, and not another. Then, methought
I heard the voice of Pallas in mine ear,
Earnest and clear, " Be of good cheer, my child.
Thy deeds were phantoms of a fever'd heart
And brain ; the natural pains, that shook thy frame,
Nature herself hath heal'd ; the fatal thoughts,
When the dread sisters seem'd to fire thy soul,
My spirit hath tamed : know this, the Will of Man
Almighty is for evil or for good ;
Or a proud Titan, fighting against Heaven,
Or a wise king, that rules him like a God.
Thine for a while rebell'd, and rose against me,
And all my counsels ; but that interval,
Between the downward lapsing of thy soul
Toward self-annihilation in despair,
And its completion in the act itself,
I filled with darkness ; and I drew thereon

A picture of thy doom : but join'd thereto
Sweet passages, and peaceful afterthoughts ;
Lest the mere shock of dread imaginings
Should prove too strong for thee. Forget not, child,
Forget not ever all that might have been,
Had I not snatch'd thy body from thy soul,
Chain'd the poor slave, and baffled the proud king.
Blind madness glories in an evil deed ;
But waken'd conscience that it was not done."

V

I thought the hot breath of that fiery time
Had wither'd up all promise of my youth ;
And that my heart would never more put forth
Or leaf or flower. I said ;—"What other love
Can take the place of this uprooted palm,
That was so plummy ? oh ! what other dream
Can throne itself, where Love hath been a king,
And ruled without a peer ?" But moments run
Like strengthless waters, that wear down the hills ;
And, when the watercourse is turn'd aside,
The hollows fill with flowers ; and daily tears
Will shed humility—perennial herb,
Whereon the affections, that we scorn'd before,
Live and breathe fresher than the summer sweets
Of passion—so I went forth from my home
Of mourning, as the sower, when the rains
Have ceased ; the thunders pass'd from off the hills ;

And thro' the golden air of autumn shine
The farthest isles. All that to me remain'd
Of pleasant memories, with the thrifty eye
Of one who sees the coming winterdays,
I gather'd ; and a little garland wove,
And o'er the torn vines, and the shaken woods,
Gazed with a love I never felt till then.
It was the time of autumn ; and perchance
Sweet fancies born of autumn tuned my soul
To softer harmonies ; and cooler air
Sent thro' my trembling pulse a better life ;
And wing'd new hopes, as 'twere from happy isles,
If hopes they might be called that rather were
The dying of despair. I heard the birds
At noonday, autumn noon, that look'd like even,
Chant clearly in the silence longdrawn notes,
That seem'd to say, peace, peace ; oh ! blessed peace,
Peace to the Earth, peace to the heart of man,
Like slumber after toil. The embowered glens
Rang to the mountain waters ; and blue eyes
Of latter flowers, along the orchard paths,
Lay like forgotten footmarks of the spring ;
And peep'd thro' fall'n leaves like first youth again.
I walk'd into those bowers, where I had been
A happy minister, delighted once
And kindler of delight ; the bowers where spake
The Muses' oracles, and Fancy sat,
And suffer'd not the fragrant flame to die
On Beauty's altars ; where our Lesbian songs

Together link'd the Present and the Past ;
And, from the sunny life that round us stirr'd,
Whatever seem'd or sweet, or sad, or strange,
We gather'd ; like the favour'd few that pass
Into the vineyard, and the rarest grapes
Pluck for the Master ; and, when vintage days
Are past and gone, in moonlight tread again
The mossy walks, and wander in the glooms ;
And in the silence seem to hear once more
The songs they sung at morn. Long days had pass'd,
Void hours of grief, the winter of the heart,
Since last I hung on those familiar boughs
The harp I struck so well. My heart untuned
At first made jarring utterance ; like those strings
So long forsaken ; but at last I sang
Something about a wounded nightingale,
That mourns, and cannot rest beneath the stars,
And with a voice so moving, that I saw
Gay eyes in tears : and then I paused, and said :—
“ Why weep ye ? ” then I knew that I had told
Unwitting my own sorrows ; and my lot
Seem'd at that moment more forlorn than all
The days before ; my tears burst forth again,
Like the last drops of tempest ; but those tears
Brought consolation ; for their loving arms
Were twined about my neck ; and then I felt
That tender Nature, who transforms the dust
Of Death to living flowers, had wrought for me,
Out of my darkest hour, a dawn of Joy.

VI

Then, in the wondrous stillness of my soul
Awaken'd to new thoughts, and other life,
Reborn unto the world, and risen again .
Like an autumnal sun with purer light,
And windless calm, I look'd back on myself,
As once I was : Oh ! what a wondrous change !
Sure I had walk'd the earth, as though it were
The Gods' own pleasaunce ; plague that struck me
 down,
And pour'd through all the winding ways of life
Wildfire for blood, had borne away with it,
Not life, but all those thoughts, on which I fed
Of old,—methought, a thousand years ago—
In a far world, wherein I had essay'd,
With pride and impious vanity, to walk ;
Tho' none but Gods could have their dwelling there
In my new place I wonder'd at myself.
How had I dared to wander in that world,
Poor mortal, 'mid the blessed? and to breathe,
Thro' this vile dust, the auras of their bliss?
Were they not just? Well had they done by me,
To send me the fire-eyed Eumenides,
To lash me back into the shades of Time
With stings of flame ; else had I died in life
Emptied of human purpose, hope itself ;
Like some sweet blossom in a garden ground,
Smit by the sun, which is the daily joy

Of other flowers, and wither'd ; on whose head
Showers fall by day, and nightly dews in vain ;
For the life-drops within it spring no more.
And then I bow'd before the mournful thought,
Sadder and wiser : love, like that I felt,
And now remember'd only, like a dream,
We strive in vain to follow, as it flies—
Like the last glory of the setting sun
To one who strays at even—thro' the gates
Of Heaven, and leaves us weeping in the dark.
Oh ! love like that is not the doom of Man.
For look how frail it is ; how like a flower,
Whose odours for a moment fill the air
With an Elysian spirit ! handle it ;
Smirch it too rudely ; breathe on it too much ;
And all it is dissolves to worse than nought,
A loveless wreck of a most lovely thing.
For beauty marr'd is oftentimes worse to see
Than a born hideousness, and noblest wine
Corrupted the intensest opposite.
And so that love, which is divine beyond
All human motions, sometimes turns to scorn,
To hatred, or mere recklessness ; or leaves
The void cold heart a prey to apathies,
Or kindles it again with fiercer joys ;
If haply it may light it up once more
With sudden glare for glory, like the glow
Of midnight burnings after the great sun.
So that men fling away their lives in sport ;

Handle the dice for pastime ; till the void
Within the heart may be forgotten quite
In the brain's whirling uproar ; seek far lands ;
Consort with wild men in a wilderness ;
Mislead the weak in their blind-eyed despair ;
Front unimagined perils ; cast their youth
And wither'd hopes under the wheels of war ;
And wise men marvel at a madman's acts
While yet the eye of reason hath not dimm'd,
Nor the strength fail'd. Such thoughts possess'd me
 long,
Till day by day the memory of the past,
Grew more and more like phantasy : I said ;—
“ What if the fever'd blood and frantic brain
Have not begotten 'twixt them something strange
As fabled wonders ; was it all a vision ?
A rainbow painted on a thundercloud,
That faints away with the ascending sun ?
Who was this Phaon with the godlike form,
And loveless eyes, but an unreal thing
Shown to me in my sleep ? My spirit's pangs
But the vain offspring of my body's pain ?
Lo ! the world brightens : hark ! how sweet the tongues
Of merry children at their early play ;
And the wind weaving melody with the leaves.
How dear the firstborn beam, the first bird's song,
As we lie panting, after sleepless nights,
And peace flies back on the fresh plumes of dawn.”
So, after that great shaking of my life,

Old things seem'd new once more ; and fair new thoughts
Sprang up like springflowers every moment now ;
And once again Nature was unto me,
As to a newborn child.

ANAKTORIA

Come to me, what I seek in vain
Bring thou, into my spirit send
Peace after care, balm after pain,
And be my friend.

SAPPHO.

I

AND then it was
I saw once more, of women wisest, best,
The great Erinna ; her of whom I dream'd ;
The heart I yearn'd to solder unto mine ;
Till our twin glories, like two differing notes
That sound like one, each counterpart of each,
Wedded together with pure harmony,
Might stream together to the end of Time.
For was she not the flower, that drank the most
From me the pure dew of poetic thought ?
To whom my lightest words were sparks of light,
As the first glance of dawn to songbirds is
That spring to meet it, with such notes as seem
Fire turn'd to sound ? Had I not led her on
Through all the summer mazes of sweet song,

Till she outran me in her eager flight ;
And I strove hard to follow her? But she,
As tho' she were a shadow without self,
Or substance of her own, gave back to me
The wreath my hands had twined her : had she owed
Thoughts half as precious to my voice, as I,
If I had sounded my own soul as she
Might have traced to her silence? Her grey days
Of toil, and care, and penury ; her lorn youth
Cheerless, and hopeless ; unseen tears, that grew
Patience and fortitude, and made her more
Than mortal in her victories over time ;
Her aspect queenlike ; and her utterance more
Than music in its majesty? Ah me !
This well I know, that when I read her words,
Or hear her voice, my soul is stay'd on hers ;
And this I told her as we met again.
Oh ! what a brow, what awful eyes were hers !
'Twas Hera flashing from her midnight orbs
The soul of Pallas, like a star ; her steps
Part Nature's own, part moulded by the grace
Of noble thoughts : she was a marble dream
Lightening with life. I look'd on her, and seem'd
To draw in from her presence strength beyond
Mine own more gentle spirit ; but I sigh'd
Lest she indeed should look on me and scorn.
Not so ; but, as a summer-tree, that sways
Its blossoms to warm winds, and earthward sheds
Its odours, toward me she lean'd her face

Touch'd with a simple sweetness, and her lips
Seal'd it upon my brow ; and then she spake
In tones like the clear waters of a spring,
That fall with tuneful echoes from the rock :—
“ Oh ! this is the prime hour of all my life,
If I by any means can pay thee back
Some little of the debt for ever due.”
She said no more ; but that was all to me.
And all that day her gentle words and pure
Fell on my heart, like drops of dew at even
On the green herb scorch'd by the sun of morn.

II

About the last days of the dying year
It chanced the noble Anaktoria came.
And when she saw me, with my sunken eyes
And bloomless cheek, and heard the tongue she loved
Untuned, and faint as lisping of a spring
After the burning summer ; first she stood
Amazed, as one who sees a spectre pass ;
Then snatch'd me to her heart with bursting tears.
Pity, soft pity, folded o'er her pride,
Became her beauty, like a pure white veil
Of simple fashion on that noble bosom :
The haughty glitter of her dark blue eyes
Quench'd in a dewy softness.—“ Ah ! dear friend,
How long,” she said, “ how long shall that sweet voice,
Clear spring of inexhaustible delight,

Be fetter'd by a single night of frost ?
Those happy songs, that I have made my own,
By oft repeating them among my friends ?
And if true sympathy be more than praise,
Satisfying both my heart and thine,
Methinks, it doth reward both me and thee :
Me more than flattering tongues, assuring me
These lips were shaped to give them utterance
Most musical, because I feel them most ;
And thee more truly than a thousand tongues,
That echo them unconscious of their charm.
Awake ! and be thy self, with the new year.
The spring's warm bud will thrust off the sere leaf,
And Love with beamy brows and living voice,
For ever following where swift Death hath pass'd,
Kindle the shadows, and awake the silence,
And fill his footmarks with fresh flowers and green.
Past time is but the sepulchre of hope ;
And what is laid therein can live no more.
A thousand voices and perennial tears
Move not nor melt the marble of the tomb ;
But thy one voice can move a thousand hearts,
Sun thy forlorn regrets, and dry thy tears.
Grief is not kind to the kind Nature here,
If it strike down so deep into the heart
As to lock up the promise of the Spring :
Listen, for I bring comfort for thine heart.
Thy mournful passion shall exhale in fires
Of glory, and thy name be as a Queen's,

Whose spirit shall not be her only sceptre.
Henceforward I will set thee up on high ;
And all the virgins of the isles shall see thee
The Muses' crowned minister. And now
Lift up thine eyes, ev'n from these quiet seats :
Thou may'st behold amid the embowering green
The sunlit porticos, and spacious front
Of a fair palace, rivalling the proudest
Own'd by your island nobles ; this my sire
With his great wealth hath raised ; and hath inwrought
With many colour'd marbles, that uphold
Roofs that are wreathed with delicate traceries,
Thick as a plot of flowers ; and here and there
Inlaid with gorgeous golden star, and disk
Of vermeil, and of sapphire, that breathed down
Soft shadows on the silent company
Of snowwhite sculptures of heroic men,
Hard by the grander figures of the Gods.
What, if I throne thee there, the queen of all ?
To rule when I am not ; and when I am,
To rule me most, and with thy voice alone ;
And such a living throng around thee there,
As, while they hear thee in the present time,
Shall see thee in the future foremost too,
If not the first, among the immortal dead !”
She ended ; but the joy within her eyes,
More eloquent than utterance, glorified
Their depths, and made them lovely as the sunstar,
Lifted upon blue waters, as she stood,

One foot a little raised, and her right hand
Stretcht forth, as tho' to gather up the world
Under her domination : and I cried ;—
“ Be ever thus, dear friend ; be ever thus.
Would that thy perfect image in mine eyes
When thou art parted, might be throned here,
In milkwhite marble, on this green hillside ;
As now I see thee ; but I dream, perchance.
For Dian, or Demeter would look down
With angry eyes, and make of thee, I fear,
A virgin Niobe.” She laugh'd, and said ;—
“ Forgive these dreams of sunshine born, and youth,
And country air ” : “ Thy dreams, more happy girl,”
I cried, “ may yet in essence, and in part
Fulfil themselves ; for unto thee alone
The happy horns of plenty on thy spring
Pour showers, all golden drops ; and what thy heart
Conceives, thy hand may fashion, if it will.
I have my dreams too ; and an hundred kings
Might sit together over golden cups,
Contriving royal palaces ; and fail
To reach the height of my fantastic art.
I too have dreams of wondrous architecture ;
Princedom, and vast emprise, and victory ;
But I will leave the land for Fauns to till.
The Nymphs themselves shall sow and reap for me.
For me the Oreads shall prepare a space
Of smoothest green upon a mountaintop ;
The Hamadryads throw the forest back

So far, that only I shall hear it surge
And murmur, when the clear Etesian blows ;
And I shall see it sweep into the plains,
And shake its stormy shadows on the floors ;
As 'twere a thousand isles, that lose themselves
Far off in purple levels, and seamists
Of tender gold, and azure, paved throughout
With slabs of summer light, and gems of flowers.
And for a long, long Summer day—no more—
For swiftly shall arise my mountain throne—
Love shall unchain the Titans for my sake.
Up on a cloud of thunder they shall sail,
Gigantic masons, brandishing on high
Tools, made to work their will with lightning speed !
So let me rather rule in that high realm,
Than in thine earthly kingdom, O dear friend.”
“ O Sappho, rich in treasures of the soul
And raptures of the heart ;” the maiden said :
“ Thou nam'st me happy, for that I have wealth,
That makes idolaters of them, who see
Nothing beneath the outward ; and commands
The poor man's handiwork ; and by its spells
Can kindle thoughts in noble souls ; and mould
The sculptor's marble, and the minstrel's song—
But, were I shut up by the prison bars
Of penury, or sickness, or such cares
As haunt thee now—(dear girl, I know thy heart,
And sue thee not to tell me the old tale.
The first spring blossom hath been wither'd up,

Because the sun hath fail'd it ; but the next
Shall be a nobler blossom than the first,
And bear sweet fruitage in the aftertime).—
Know'st thou if I should find within me that,
Which might beguile sad memories ; lull my pain ;
And by enchanted touches, like thine art,
Turn sorrow into music, fit to melt
A thousand hearts to sweetness, that might be
Cruel without it ; and bring recompense
Ev'n to thine own ? I tell thee no : such bliss,
As falls to me, is born of constant change
Rather than constancy ; variety
Rather than fixed purpose. Had I not
The power to wander with the winds ; to turn
Winter to summer ; with my clime to change
Old friends for new, and then come back again
To find the old, the newer ; and to run
To and fro like a restless babe ; perchance
The lack of fancied good might bow me down
Lower than many evils. Come with me,
Dear Sappho, come with me ; and we will fly,
Where nothing but sweet memories shall pursue,
Sweet hopes go on before us, with the sun.
Say me not nay ; for thou wilt find my charm
Potent to heal, and bring thee back thy peace ;
And more delights than ever comes to me,
Familiar with them, and without thy heart,
That trembling harp that sighs to every wind :
Come with me, O my Sappho, come with me."

And so it was, that, as the sunny breeze
Of morning scatters all the clouds of night ;
The spring wind musical with songs of birds
Bears off the lifeless leaves ; her voice awoke
A chord within, responsive to her own ;
And wing'd me, like a lark that drowns in light,
Up through a flood of radiant phantasies,
Visions of happy lands, of golden isles
Where sorrows are forgotten, and all tears
Are wiped away ; fair cities, flowery dales ;
Blue rivers, folding in their soft embrace
A thousand rushing rilllets, and mingling all
Their thousand happy voices into one
Deep choral harmony ; that seems to blend
All blisses of fair climes where they were born ;
Green mountain solitudes, whence there are breathed
The dewy spirits of inviolate flowers ;
And the glad eye looks down on half a world.
Across the mirror of my soul there pass'd
Enchanted pictures, as when we behold
The swift-blown clouds transfigured in the light ;
And suddenly I clasp'd my hands, and cried ;—
“ I will, I will ; my Lethe shall not be
Oblivion, the cold shadow of dead hope ;
But memory, slain by fairer memories still,
Like summer flowers that wreath a funeral urn.”
Three morns thereafter we stepp'd down into
Her gilded galley, where the regal wealth
Of the great merchant prince, her sire, shone forth

In carvedwork and colours : the tall mast
Of cedar, ring'd with ivory bands, upbore
A sail, that caught the breath of April flowers,
Fresh from the budding hills, in its pink folds,
That changed the yellow sunbeam into rose.
And from the prow—a long-hair'd Naiad prone
To dive into the azure whence she rose—
Young roses hung, and painted the smooth sea
With their own beauty ; and soft couches, strow'd
With purple, curtain'd from the eager light
By laurel sprays, and myrtle intertwined,
Woo'd to low converse or to waking dreams.
A lusty band of rowers rose at once
As we approach'd, and hail'd us with a song.
And there was one, who seem'd to rule the rest
By hand, and eye, more than outspoken words.
A kingly shape was he, and might have been
The great Ulysses, had he lived before,
The strong and wise : his years were manhood's prime :
His sunny aspect, and his fearless eye,
Spoke of all climes, and many trials met
And overcome ; and Anaktoria said ;—
“ Sappho, look on the mainstay of our house ;
Who by his care, and craft, and valiant heart
Hath gather'd half our riches ; him we trust
To steer the vessel of our fortunes here
And there, by sea or land, and shape our aims
To prosperous ends—and ofttimes he hath wrought
Our vague hopes into such realities

As were not dreamt of ; him we trust to steer
Through adverse ventures and rough hates, and guile,
As thro' wild winds and sunken rocks the bark
He holds in his command : a noble man !”

III

Like Summer birds that fly from bough to bough,
And bathe their songs in light, and the rich breath
Of fullblown flowers, we sped from shore to shore,
Fed with the charm of change ; till real life
Show'd as unreal, like a spectacle
Seen at a theatre, or dreams that lapse
Into fresh dreams, or glancing of a stream
Through evergreens, and ever-varying blooms.
And when we anchor'd in the pleasant port
Of Himera, among the first we met
Was Tisias, whom men style Stesichorus ;
For that he crown'd plain song with harmonies,
And led the choral march its step sublime.
For many days we wander'd forth with him,
A courteous host, and gentle ; and he said :—
“ I am a self-made exile in this land :
Far from my native hills, where dwelt my sires
In days before ; the ancient cities there,
With their grey walls that seem by giants wrought,
Know me no more ; and here all things are new.”
And then he show'd us sunny Himera ;
Its stainless marbles mirror'd in the calm

And purple waters, the unfinish'd walls
And yet defenceless gates ; great theatres
But halfway from the ground ; uncolumn'd fanes
With still unsculptured pediments, to be
Henceforth the thrones of godlike forms, portray'd
By mortal hands that wield immortal art ;
To live ev'n when the very names are dead
Of them who shaped them : " Strange it is," he said,
" To see the solitude swept by the winds,
That heard for ages but the seabird's cry,
Or fisher's low sad song, transform'd, as 'twere,
By magic art, into a world of life ;
Henceforth to make this little plot of earth—
Where spring and autumn, day and night, and waves,
And winds, were monarchs only, leaving nought
To mark their empire of a thousand years—
Gather within itself in one brief day
Swifter and vaster change : where man is king,
The mind of man is as a mighty wind ;
The thousand years of time as the great sea
Blown on perpetually, that strows the shore
With countless wrecks, but piles the space between
With gold, and pearl, and every precious gem,
That rise and shine for ever." As he spake,
We heard from far and near the mingled sounds
Of masons, shouting from the scaffolds tall ;
Hammer, and saw, and anvil, and the gride
Of carven stone ; and still from far and near
The tumult soften'd with the sound of songs.

And many days we listen'd to his voice
 Of tuneful melancholy : oft he sued
 In vain to hear a song of mine ; ah me !
 Not yet the fancies lock'd within my soul
 Had sprung to life again, the frozen rills
 Of melody to freedom ; but I seized
 A lyre, and wrung from it, I knew not how,
 So wild and sweet a carol ; as when a gust
 Of summer rain wrings from a ruffled rose
 Its rarest breath, and mingles it with tears.
 He look'd on me in wonder ; and he said :—
 “ As is the spirit to a lovely form ;
 As is the perfume to a purple flower ;
 As is the music to that song of thine,
 Making it utter something more than words ;
 So are the words themselves, though all too few,
 Speaking of maiden love unrecompensed ;
 As 'twere a better soul which thou hast given
 To an old tale of mine which thou shalt hear.”

LEUCADIA

IV

CALYCE

“ IN fair Leucadia, youngest of the isles,
 Dwelt Calyce, a maid of modest eyes,
 And simple speech ; she was not one of those
 Whom all eyes in a multitude might mark

As a surpassing vision, tall and proud
As some Olympian, for a while on earth.
But those, who watch'd, with wiser insight saw
A veiled softness in her sometime smile ;
Like midnight moonlight, when no leaf is blown,
And scarce a sound is heard, and common things,
That garish day would burn up into nought,
Are mellow'd into sweetness. Oh ! she was
No darkbrow'd, darkorb'd empress of such hearts ;
Too swiftly slain by an imperial eye,
As by a flash of sunlight strongest men
Are stricken down. But those who heard her speak
Of her delights—which were not as the joys
Of city maidens, striving to o'ermatch
Each other by an artful grace, a robe
Folded more winningly, by flowing locks
Sprinkled with gold, or that sweet silver laugh
Like harped trebles running up and down,
That lyre attuned to their self-love so well—
Ah ! those who heard her to a songbird sing,
And wait sweet answers, and then sing again ;
Or leading on some fond child's lispng tongue
To perfect speech, or uttering to herself
Her love and awe ; heard the melodious voice
Of a rare soul. She, like a woodnymph pure,
Loved the green gloom of sylvan arches, cool
And still, save when great winds, or thunders lone
Roll'd o'er them their deep music, or sweet breath
Of summer, in the moonlight or at dawn,

Sigh'd thro' the topmost leaves ; when the first flower
Look'd on her from the woodwalks ; the first note
Of lark at morn, or starry nightingale
Witch'd her quick ear ; or, after many days
Of stormy wind and cloud, the faithful sun
Hail'd her at early morn ; and, as she stept
To meet him thro' the dews, she veil'd her eyes
With one small hand, the other fill'd with spring.
Ah ! those who mark'd her then might well believe
That eyes, whose light is sometimes veil'd in tears,
Win more than those that dazzle in their joy :
That low-voiced love is more than gaudy pride ;
As evergreens outlive the crimson flower.

V

There is a forest, on the mountain side
Above the city, whence, across the strait,
Is seen the land of Hellas, the blue heights,
That paint themselves in the Ambracian gulph ;
And on the other hand in the clear light
The far Corinthian waters. Here she dwelt ;
And with her widow'd mother found her life
Amid her fruittrees and well-water'd flowers,
And her rare-breathing plots ; and orchard shades
Shelter'd the loving songbirds well as if
The whole lay underneath a barred cage :
For she was known to them, as they to her ;
And at the welcome of her tuneful voice

They flock'd about her ; and no fowler snared
Her winged children, and no winter cold
Or summer heat, while she was nigh at hand,
Prevail'd against them. When she struck her lyre
To some old ditty, her clear voice went out
Into the oakwalks like a sunbeam ; when
She ceased to sing, and suddenly, there rose
A tide of all sweet sounds, from far and near,
Around her, and made answer to her own.
And then she laugh'd, and joy'd at touch of joy,
Like breezy waters dimpling in the sun.
Sometimes, when she had gone to early rest
At set of sun, a flood of moonlight soft,
Falling upon her dreaming eyes, awoke her
Suddenly to the actual world again.
And when she saw 'twas midnight, with the moon
And silence ; all but whispers of the leaves,
When the seawind, yet warm with summer, flew
Down the long woodwalks, and o'er-arched aisles
Fragrant and dark, thro' which a golden star
Peep'd here and there ; then she would rise, with foot
Scarce heard in the deep hush, and make her way,
With awe that was not fear, until she came,
Where the tall forest sloped into the plain,
And left an opening, like a portal huge ;
Thro' which her vision wander'd in the deep
Clear heaven above ; and down along the waves
Of the oaktrees, that murmur'd till they met
The murmuring sea, and outspread city fair,

Whose towers shone forth like silver in the night.
And, if it was a festival, she heard
Faint sound of songs ; if in the day had been
A tumult of the people, she could mark
The uproar growing less and less ; if doom
Of fire had fallen on some homestead there,
She saw, and shudder'd, the uprolling flame
Scatter the sea and the white walls with blood ;
And caught the sound of lamentable cries,
And rushing wheels, till she too fled away,
And sought again the couch that she had left ;
Till sunny day came up and drown'd all fears.
But most at morn she loved to tread those paths
Of balmy shade ; and when she stood at length
Beneath the great gate opening on the sky,
And the far lands, their azure bays, and isles,
And mountain snows, that snatch'd the crimson dawn ;
While yet the vales, the rivers, and the seas
Lay darkling, in the solitude divine
She drank a peerless joy ; she bade the woods
Answer her joy, and wake up all their songs.
She bade the winds unroll their banners broad,
And roll their harmonies ; she bade the seas
Send up from far below their choral bass,
In honour of that moment, when the sun
Crown'd the great world, and set on fire the steeps
And promontories, and made every tower
A blazing lamp, and every sandy beach
A golden floor. And then the city woke

With many voices like a living sea ;
And barks shot forth as seabirds ; here and there
The fishers hurl'd their big nets from the prow ;
And armed hosts went out with trumpet-sound,
And clash of arms ; and their long line of spears
Moved like a silent river in the sun ;
Then drown'd in sudden shadow ; soon the clouds
Of dawn evanish'd in the gulf of day.

VI

One day in early autumn she was there.
The rains had fallen, and the winds had ceased.
Tempests had swept the air of mist and cloud ;
And left a deeper purple in the air ;
The stirless woods, tinted with gold and rose,
Breathed up a dewy sweetness, like a prayer
Of mute thanksgiving for the latter days
Of blissful calm and sunshine ; and the voice
Of the far seas seem'd nearer ; and far peaks,
Sprinkled with the first snows, seem'd now as though
A hand might touch them ; and far cities shone
As built of gems : and suddenly there rose
From underneath the oaken glooms a sound
Of merry tumult, mix'd with echoing horn
And crying hound ; still nearer and more near
The jovial hunt came up ; she would have fled.
Too late was her resolve ; for, ere she turn'd,
To seek the shadows of the upland trees,

The youthful company of merry men
Fill'd all the space beneath her, and the plot
Of green which was her watch-tower night or day.
But, in the simple gaze of her surprise,
Less awe there was than wonder, as she stood,
Like Artemis in sight of mortal eyes.
But she was circled by her maids, when he
Too daring huntsman leapt the screen of leaves ;
While Calyce, sweet hermit of the woods,
Was all alone when that bright host came on,
Radiant with rich apparel, plume, and casque,
And sheening spears ; she knew not if she look'd
On mortal men, as they came swiftly by,
Their horses snuffing up the mountain air
With shrill delight, and tossing up their manes ;
Or whether 'twas a vision of such shapes,
As mingle with the earthborn for a day
And pass and come no more. For there was one,
The foremost of them all, who seem'd a king
Above the rest, more lordly clad than they ;
Nobler in form and stature, as he stay'd
His course a little while the others pass'd.
And, leaning gently from his saddle-bow,
He look'd upon her, and she look'd on him.
And in that moment each beheld in each
A beauty they had never seen before.
He look'd upon her, as her eyes might look
On a wild bird, or windflower ; and her eyes
Drank in his aspect, as tho' she had seen

Hermes himself ; she gave him a white rose.
With a light laugh he laid it on his heart ;
And from his bosom pluck'd a jewel of gold,
And cast it on her neck ; she bent her head
To eye the glittering wonder ; and then raised
To look upon the giver ; he was not.
For in that moment he had fled away,
Turning into a bypath, thus to join
The sooner his companions ; yet her ear
Had caught some low-toned accents, ere he went,
Whisper'd unto himself, that seem'd to her
More precious than all gifts ; for he had said ;—
' Oh ! could a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
Words sweeter than a song ; but when she saw
Nought but the earth, and sky, and autumn woods,
She could have wept ; she thought she was a seer
Of ghostly things ; but there was the bright gold ;
And still she heard the belling hounds afar,
And neighing steeds, and cries of merry men ;
Till the sounds follow'd the fair sight away,
And only left the sighing of the leaves,
And from below the sobbing of the sea.
All day she wander'd, and she reck'd not where ;
And knew not why ; her heart was sweetly stirr'd.
She thought not what had fill'd it with the joy ;
Given her a lighter step, a clearer voice ;
And made her see strange pictures, as she pass'd
Under the whispering boughs, and thrust aside
The tangled sprays, and caught a glimpse far off

Of dewy dingles, shifting silently
From light to shadow ; green embowered nooks
Floor'd with soft moss, and twinkling flowers, that laugh'd
A moment in the sunny light and air ;
Then gloom'd again as suddenly ; bright birds,
That glanced into the light and out again
As lightning ; or some hidden waterfall
That rose and fell with the low wind ; or herd
Of frightened deer, that started at the sound
Of foes she could not hear ; ev'n her light step,
Or glimmer of her garments as she came,
Ere yet they cast a shadow on the ground.
So it was sunset ere she reach'd her home.
But when she raised her eyelids—for she near'd
Her own gate, scarcely heeding how she came,
With her eyes fix'd upon the turfy way
In a day dream—What saw she at the gate ?
There were the hunters she had seen at morn,
Where was their chief ? Their looks were sombre now,
Their voices sad and low ; and when she spoke,
It seem'd they heard not, for they answer'd nought.
So she pass'd in between their careless eyes
As though they saw her not. Just then she mark'd
The tallest tree, that overtopt the rest
Cast down the longest shadow ; and she thought,—
' Ah me ! if all the blisses of this day
That have made dim all joy I ever knew,
Should end in deepest sorrow ; woe is me !
If proudest life should end in sudden death

As the bright cataract leaps into the dark,
As the great sun sinks down into the sea !'
Her mother met her in the inner house,
And pointed toward her chamber, where he lay
Upon her bed, that mighty man, that lord
Of men, who was her wonder and her joy
At sunny morn, a few brief hours before.
The warm cheek, and the happy eager eye,
The strength that poised the javelin in his hand,
What were they now ? There lay he pale, and dumb,
And deaf and blind ; the life-blood staunch'd but now,
That purpled his apparel, sure had stream'd
Thro' some great gate of life ; some evil beast,
Some lynx, or tusky boar, or hungry wolf,
He thought to slay, had slain him ; was there hope
While the heart stirr'd ? or were those pulses low,
Like fluttering wings of the fall'n bird, or like
The quivering of the fawn he struck that day ?
She knew not ; but her hope was as the star
That rises after sunset ; or that moon,
All golden, opposite the sinking sun,
For she remember'd the enchanting words,
'Oh ! can a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
The sun is sunken ; and the moon is up
Once more ; the merry chase with horn and hound
Have taken silently the downward way
Toward the city ; many days and nights
The day and night were idle unto him,
Who lay within that forest home ; and friends

Look'd on him daily, but he knew them not.
The rayless eyes grew bright as throbbing stars ;
The deathpale cheek wax'd red as burning flame ;
In its own sacred shrine the spirit hid,
While Death and Life made him their battlefield.
It was a woeful thing to hear him speak
Of pleasant pastimes, as tho' they would be,
Because they had been, ready at his word ;
Of yesterdays, as tho' they were to-morrows ;
To hear blithe laughter change into a shriek
Of torment ; and a threatful angry frown,
And lifted hand lapse into moveless calm ;
And sudden peace that seem'd the end of all.
But when the cup, that held the anodyne
Mix'd by her careful hand, had brought him rest,
It seem'd the ruler of his waking thoughts
Still sway'd him in his slumber, for his lips
Would whisper, 'Oh ! I love thee, how I love !'
And oft again she heard the loving words,
'Oh ! could a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
And now, when after weary nights he slept,
And gentler pulses, like subsiding streams
After hot thunders, lived along his frame ;
Again she went forth with a jocund heart.
And that first love—which scarce had time enough
Out of the cloud of many fears and cares
To look upon itself—now sprang to life,
And was a terror to her ; who was she ?
What had she done to raise her eyes to one,

As far above her as Olympian Jove
A peasant of the valley? And she blush'd
Ev'n to the dewy leaves and shadows cool.
But then again she thought; 'He look'd on me :'
But mocking conscience; 'Sure I look'd on him
Or how could I have seen him?' 'But not first.
His eyes outran my own; ah me! ah me!
Or first or last, 'tis certain I was slain.'
But once again she heard the whisper'd words,
'I love thee, how I love thee'; once again,
'Oh! could a sweeter handmaid be than this?'
Then she remember'd every lifeful change,
That came across his pale face, as he lay,
Looking with conscious, and more conscious eyes,
Into the golden autumn air, across
The crimson clusters of the viny walk,
That led down the home garden into gloom
Of ancient forest; till with each new day
His dark eyes brighten'd, and his tongue was loosed;
First to low whispers, then to manly words;
And then a smile—no, she was not deceived,
He loved her; and that smile was as the sun
Risen upon the dawn that went before—
And then the outstretch'd hand that clasp'd her own.
No, she was sure; and then the happy words,
'Oh! could a sweeter handmaid be than this?'

VII

So on that day, and many a day beside,
She wander'd woodward, while her mother served
The sick man in his chamber ; brought him fruits,
And cooling syrups, or a bunch of flowers ;
The last a wonder, with such speaking art
So fondly, and so curiously wreathed,
That only love itself, through her young hands,
Could have devised it ; babbled to him oft
Of the poor folk, the simple foresters,
Their pains and pleasures ; bridals in greenwood
Unheard of thro' the city ; the light dowers
Of wedded maidens, fair and blithe as nymphs,
And poor as songbirds : and she heard from him
The fell mishap, that dash'd the turf and flowers
With the red blood drawn from him, as he sprang
Down from his horse, and without fear or care
Bending above the wild swine he had spear'd,
Drew forth the knife to slay him, when he rose
With his last strength, and rushing on his foe
Avenge'd himself, and perish'd in the act.
And well it was his slacken'd sinews wrought
But half the ill his slakeless fury aim'd ;
Or death's pale image, which they bore away,
Had never changed except to death itself.
Sweet Calyce, she wander'd far away
To hear the music of her one glad heart
Reverberate from every silver bell

Of the rosecurtain'd rivulet ; every note
Of tuneful merle ; to see its soaring hope
Look up into her face from every disk,
And golden anther of the lowly flowers
That wagg'd their heads, and laugh'd, as she came on
With jocund step ; yet lingering here and there
Beneath some bank, whose wavy curtain screen'd
Both eye and ear from every sight and sound ;
All but the lispings of some runnel clear,
That lapsed through clustering cress, and waterflags,
Blue bells, and yellow lilies at her feet ;
So fleetly, and so stilly, that it seem'd
A mirror laid for her to look into ;
And see the beauty she had never dared
To prize until that moment ; yet not seen
More clearly than the other by its side
Pictured upon the glass of phantasy,
As fairly as her own upon the stream !
And tho' she ne'er had breathed them to herself,
She shamed not to remember his sweet words ;
' Oh ! could a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
What wonder if she link'd the two together ?
And, having warrant of her own fond heart
In favour of him, she was fain to trust
Those simple words as messengers from him ?

VIII

One day, it chanced, she turn'd, ere set of sun.
But, as she near'd her home, she heard a voice.
Her heart beat quick ; she harken'd ; sure 'twas his ;
Why did she tremble ? Was it not delight
To know that he was strong ? That he went forth,
To breathe the westwind, better than old wine
To one return'd from death ? To hear him speak
Softly unto himself ? Himself ? Was that
Himself that answer'd to himself, that tongue
So silvery-clear, so girlish ? Listen not,
Sweet Calyce, but rather seal thine ears ;
And lay thy head among the drowsy flowers,
That breathe sleep, and forgetfulness ; and dream
Thy waking dream in that deep sleep, ev'n though
It never wake again for evermore.
And yet she fled not ; but her heart that beat
Wildly, grew still as marble ; and her eyes—
Clear as the western sunbeam, thro' the leaves
Quivering, that lighten'd on a little space,
Matted with flowers, a hundred paces off,
While she stood under shade dark as her soul—
Look'd on two lovers ; he was bending down :
The damsel looking up into his face
With such a rapturous tenderness, as she
Only believed could breathe up from herself ;
And he, altho' with utterance clear and low,
Answer'd her ;—' Oh ! I love thee, how I love thee !'

And press'd therewith a kiss upon her lips.
And she was beautiful ; so beautiful,
She seem'd a goddess, in the sunny shine
That flow'd about her. After a brief space,
He pointed to the forest home, where he
Had lain in sickness, and she saw his lips
Murmur to low words that she could not hear.
But when he raised his voice—and, had he not,
The sweet words she had oft-times heard before,
Now graven on her very heart and ear,
Had echoed to the whisper'd syllables—
She heard not, 'Oh ! I love her, how I love her' ;
But now, as to the ear a tuneless lyre,
Or to the eye a faded scentless flower,
The words that were her life, but lifeless now,
'Oh ! could a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
Lower and lower, thro' the quivering leaves
The sunlight throb'd and trembled, as it flow'd
Along the green way, underneath the boughs
That vanish'd cityward ; with dreadful eyes
She saw a sight that was the end of all.
Up thro' the stream of dying daylight rose
A brighter vision than the first she saw.
No hunters now, no cries of merry men,
With blown horn, and uplifted lance, and sound
Of trampling hoofs ; but orderly array
Of lords and dames, in festal raiment robed ;
Crimson, and gold, and purple, with the pomp
Of gilded car, and horses pacing slow,

With curved necks and large eyes, blazing back
The level sun, and mingled sound of flute
And dulcimer. And when the glittering host
Stood still, that mighty man, that king of men,
Who now was lord of that poor virgin heart,
Led forth the queen that was, or was to be :
And to the central car he led her up,
And took his seat beside her ; then again
Stream'd the sweet music ; and the stately train
Turn'd back the way they came ; and by and by
She lost all sight and sound ; and they sank down
Into the glooms of even, as the sun
Drew back again the tapestry of gold,
Strown all along the midway of the wood
By which the noble company had pass'd;
With chariots, and with music, and that one
Of women, worthy of the love of him
The one of men she loved, who loved not her.
How long sweet Calyce in silence stood
Under the ancient cypress in the shade,
That hid her from their sight, and heard its moan
That answer'd to her sighing, she knew not ;
Leaning her brow against its rugged bark
Till it was fray'd and bleeding. But at last,
When she look'd up, with pale face, and dim eyes,
All, all was shadow round her ; the deep gloom
Of forest night, all but the stars ; and some
Fell down like burning tears ; but oh ! her soul
Was starless, and her eyes too hot for tears.

When suddenly she started from her place,
And rush'd forth, with her hands upon her brows,
Into the broad green way, just as the moon
Rose in the east, and shone upon her face,
And turn'd it into marble, as she flung
Her arms to heaven, and shriek'd that heaven might
hear.

IX

'O Night, why hast thou any moon or star ;
Not rather darkest dark, that might be felt ?
Not to look down with pitiless cold eyes
Upon me desolate, but rather shroud
In everlasting gloom, the sunny world,
That morning nevermore should wake again,
Steep'd in all fatal magic, full of shows
That win the heart thro' the enchanted eyes ;
But turn to phantoms, like the bow of heaven
I ran to clutch when I was but a babe ;
And wept to see it vanish. If I were blind,
I still had heard the linnet and the lark ;
The falling spring, and summer breeze, and breathed
The early violet, and the last red rose ;
But nothing had made pictures in mine eyes
To grave them on my heart. I had been free,
If all the fair Immortals had come down
To walk the green woods, or to take their rest
Under my roof : if I had only dreamt
All I have heard and seen, and woke by night

In a hush'd blackness, ev'n the memory of it
 Had made me yearn and weep, and pray to heaven
 To make it real ; though a voice from heaven
 Had cried ' Beware ! 'tis madness ! ' But I know,
 Ah me ! I know my waking eyes have seen,
 Mine ears have heard ; and now the living truth
 Is vanish'd like a vision ! lost, oh ! lost :
 Far more for ever, than if I had fed
 Upon the dream for ever ; hoping still
 That in the mortal future, or in that
 That may be endless, when mortality
 Is ended, it might meet me some fair day,
 Substantial, henceforth never to dissolve ;
 As ye have faded, O fair days, and false
 Into an endless nothing.

Oh ! I thought—

What did I think ? I knew not what I thought,
 Or if I thought at all, for light of joy,
 As one who sees not for the dazzling sun,
 Oft as he look'd on me with earnest eyes,
 And took my strengthless hand in his, and said ;—
 ' O Calyce, methinks it were a boon
 The Gods might play with, to fly far away
 From the hot noonday light of daily state ;
 The pitiless revel when the eyes are blind
 With sleepless hours, and heart and head are faint
 With public care ; fly, and be found no more ;
 When tongues prove false, that were believed most true ;
 And warm hearts trusted only burn with hate.

When midnight tumults scatter lovers' dreams ;
And war, or treason, as a thundercloud,
O'ershadow some fleet hour of joy unfeign'd,
We steal from vanities in solitude,
Fly far away into a peace like this,
Where worldly hearts, like birds in gilded wires,
Would never will or think to follow us.
To mark, as thou dost, the returning spring,
And the last hues of autumn—oh ! how sweet
They seem unto me, now born into life
Once more, to me, but now a falling leaf,
And nevermore to see another May.'
Said he not, 'us' ? Who was the other half
Of that one twofold syllable ? Oh ! I see ;
And better blindness than such sight. O eyes,
That fed me from my childhood with delights !
O heart, that grew in strength from day to day,
With such ambrosial sweets ! why have ye thus
Led me, as one who wanders on thro' flowers,
Right to the edge of an abyss ? Can faith
Follow the faithless ? love be taken captive
By a loveless voice, a smile where love is not,
More than a fire within an icicle,
That glows with hues of flame ? Is vanity
The heart of woman ? if 'twas mine, 'tis fallen,
As fast and far into the utter dark,
As that fleet star I saw this moment pass,
For now I know who is that other half :
And scorn of all that ever was myself

Imbitters my despair. I saw the queen,
The queen of beauty and his queen ; I saw
A woman, worthy of the foremost man,
Who loves him as he loves her : and I know
She is in grace and beauty more than I ;
As Aphrodite, fresh from the blue sea,
More than a dusky beggar : and I love !
O fool ! and yet there is no place for thee
In that one heart, where thou wouldst bask ; no
place

In all this lovely world where love is not.
For now all other loves that lit my heart
Are quench'd for ever ; as all lesser fires
Grow black against the sun. Fool, thou must die.
And yet, methinks, it were a pleasant thing
To live for ever, even without hope ;
To love his image pictured on my heart,
If I but thought that loving heart was mine
I saw him give another ; howsoe'er
Space, and time, and pride, and fear might hold
Our sympathies apart. It cannot be.
Fool, thou must die ; there is no place for thee
In all this world : Oh yes, there is ; remember
The sweet words, but as poison'd honey now ;—
'Oh ! could a sweeter handmaid be than this ?'
My royal lady bids me stand before her.
She looks into my face ; she laughs ; I read
Her thoughts, as though I were an oracle :
And, if she spoke, it would be words like these ;—

'I care not, for she is not loveable ;
I fear not, for she is not beautiful ;
I doubt not, for she is a simpleton.'
She speaks not ; but she turns her eyes on him ;
And with their glory he is blind again ;
And shows it by the dazzle in his own.
And then she turns to me, as tho' to say,
'Judge for thyself, there is no peril here.'
And yet she only utters ;—'Pretty maid,
Serve me if thou art willing ; for I see
'A sweeter handmaid cannot be than thou.'
Serve thee? oh yes ! as I have heard a tale.
My Lady calls me from the topmost tower,
Where she is cushion'd upon Tyrian folds,
Or cloth of gold, after the banquet hour,
To slumber to the scent of shaded flowers,
Mix'd with the fragrance from the forest blown,
And murmuring leaves and moaning of the seas.
And when I reach with toil the topmost stair,
And pass the doorway ; saith the royal dame,
'Fetch me my kerchief dropt there at thy feet,'
Three feet from her own chair ; or, 'Hie thee down,
And bring my wimple from the banquet-table,'
Or 'jewell'd slipper lost upon the stair ;
It was too hot to stoop ;' or, 'Go for him
My lord'—Oh yes ! her lord, not mine—that they
May while away soft moments, with the doors
Closed on the worthless one. Was it my heart,
Too faithful heart, that warn'd me, or a voice

Out of the crowd, that whisper'd, as they pass'd ;—
'To-morrow they are wed' ? Ah ! then, to-morrow,
To-morrow—yet'—and two large tears, the last
Of mortal sorrows fell among the dews—
'And yet I would have served him, better far
Than many hirelings, in whose conscience fear
Awakens memory ; but who lack the faith
Ev'n of a dog or horse ; I should have read
His instincts in his eyes ; before he spoke
Have scann'd his thoughts, and syllabled his words.
If he were anger'd, I would judge myself
So cruelly that he would cry out, ' Hold' !
And, if he slept, I would watch over him :
If he were sleepless, I would never rest :
And if he died—ah ! he is dead to me :
To-morrow they are wed ; ah, then, to-morrow,
To-morrow'—there was silence in the wood
For many hours ; and then the moon went down,
And there was darkness ; 'twixt the dark and dawn
Where was she ? The forsaken mother watch'd,
And wail'd, and wept ; and yet she came not home.
The finches flutter'd, and awoke in fear ;
The wild things fled in wonder at the sound
Of swift unwonted steps at dead of night ;
And peaceful Dryads raised their oak-crown'd head
Awhile, to listen for some dreadful deed !

X

The dawn was flushing o'er the eastern hills.
The marble temple of the God of light
Began to glimmer on the southern steep,
And cast its shadow on the deep ; below
The waters wail'd ; and the sweet winds of morn,
With the seawaters, made a dirge of sighs.
For, ere the darkness had given place to day,
A flash of silent lightning from the west
Show'd the torn raiment, and unbraided hair
For one brief moment of the hopeless one
Held like a spirit, in mid-air ; but she,
Long ere her warm limbs mingled with the sea,
Spared the reluctant waves the sad delight
Of snatching her young life ; and she was borne,
Midway 'twixt sea and sky, into a realm
Where hapless loves, those thunderstricken flowers,
Put forth once more their purple ; and her limbs
Stain'd not the sharp rocks with their virgin blood ;
For sea-nymphs bore her up in their embrace.
Nothing of her was found upon the shore
But the false jewel of gold ; and if some hand
Of fisherman had pluck'd it from the sand,
And borne it to the king, he might have droopt
His head upon his hand in woeful wise ;
And low tongues might have whisper'd to his soul
Secrets unknown to all his wisest men,
And sorrows he had never dreamt before."

XI

He ended ; and methought I heard again
My own tale told ; for, through the fiery haze
Of those tormented moments, when the breath
Of the Eumenides had laid me low ;
And wither'd up long memories of the past,
All but the one, that I had loved in vain,
I scarce could tell what sunder'd my own lot
From hapless Calyce's ; but wonder took
Place of all fitful moods that came and went,
Like shapeless clouds, shame, sorrow, anger, fear,
Or maiden modesty that held them all,
And cross'd my heart, but, thro' hush'd lips and pale,
Gave forth no sign. Had Earth, great Mother, heard
Down to her central soul the cry of one
Afflicted child ? and throb'd from far, within
Her sympathetic pulses, whereunto
All kindred hearts might vibrate ? Had the storm,
That shook me, echoed far off, like the sound
Of thunders, like the silent lightning-flash,
Ran round the world ? How else had Tisias known
My mystery ? For a while I droopt my head
Upon my hand, and dared not meet the gaze
I thought I felt. If this were phantasy,
Then dreams and visions, howsoever strange,
Were match'd by life itself ; if sometimes more,
Were often less ; or if the poet's song
Were life made music, then some other heart

Had beat as mine and suffer'd, and his ear
Had heard that tale not mine. And so I laugh'd,
And raised my head, and look'd into his face.
His eyes were calm ; they look'd not into mine.
There was no question in them, no reserve
More eloquent than words, that seem'd to say ;—
“Thy secret is inviolate with me,
Thy precious heart is casketed in mine.”

XII

He ended ; and the story he had told,
And I have echoed from him, was adorned
With no fair flowers of poesy ; but given
In his plain speech. “For if such things be true,”
He said, “they have no need to be o'erlaid
With colours rare, or framed in gold and gems,
Or chanted to the sound of tuneful strings,
That they be heard and seen. And yet such joys
And woe, so far beyond the common heart—
As sunlit peaks, or heights of sunless snow,
Stand forth so wondrously, that awful eyes
Are turn'd upon them—all the more enchant
The poet's inner sense ; and draw him on
To look more fixedly on passing shows
Than the world's eye, that for a moment sees,
Marvels, and then forgets ; so that past years
Or dark, or bright, like lands they leave behind
Drown'd in grey mist, and then beheld no more,

Pass into fable, then oblivion.
So pardon me, my friends, if I have dared
To breathe such life into a mournful tale,
As lyric measures, to sweet music join'd,
Can best impart ; and should it be that I
Give to these sorrows of mortality
Immortal being, such as marble yields
To the great Gods and to heroic men ;
Haply it may not be in vain, if one
Fond heart of woman blossoms with a leaf
Of wisdom, one man's with a flower of love."

XIII

I had no time to ponder ; for he rose ;
Drew back a vail, which hung between the hall
And inner chambers ; at a signal given
Within, the doors were open'd right and left.
And lo ! two bands of youths, eight on each hand,
Ranged themselves ; then came harpers with their harps ;
And first the right, and then the left hand choir
Took up, in lyric measures interwoven
Harmoniously, the sweetest of the joys,
And saddest of the sorrows he had told ;
As when the choicest of a garden's flowers
Are wreathed into a garland ; and pale bells,
That droop their heads in piteous wise, are mix'd
With purple roses ; and there is no place
For other blooms, or the green leaf itself,

Which, like the common things of daily life,
Charms not the eye. I listen'd ; and I heard,
Methought, the inmost disembodied souls
Of anguish, and of ecstasy, upborne
On wings of melody ; as when a cloud,
Risen with the sun upon the radiant light,
Soars on, and drowns amid the golden fire.
I listen'd, and I wept ; but no one knew
Whether those tears were sweet, or bitter ; whether
Shed for myself, or for poor Calyce ;
And whether joy, or sorrow drew them forth ;
For they may fall for either ; lastly whether
Music, the soul of all things beautiful,
Be not itself all-potent to subdue
The heart, and with its voices manifold
Shake it like terror. So I listen'd long
The music, and the voices ; and my tears
Fell in the twilight ; for the day was done
And when the end had come, and we arose,
And parted from the noble Tisias,
My heart was calmer in my breast ; my thoughts
Breathed something of the sweetness of the past,
Without its pain ; as the low winds of even
Bore from the champaign dews impregn'd with flowers.
And softer light, less than the noon of joy,
Yet more than midnight gloom, dawn'd in my soul,
Fair as the moon just rising from the sea. ♪

ANDROS

Wave following wave, each like to each,
Rolls over us, and more and more
 To bail out the flood
 Will tax us sore.

ALCÆUS.

I

ONCE more the shores fly back, the mountains fall,
The waters dance around us ; and once more
Thro' throbbing starlit night, and sunny day,
Regrets, and mournful memories were undone,
As cloud-mists by the many-colour'd morn,
By manifold swift change. What time for thought,
When vision after vision struck the sense,
And made of memory such a treasure-house,
So rich with gold and gems, that in their light
No shadows lived? And when the eyesight fail'd
To dive into the distance ; and the land
Went down beneath the waters, and we saw
Only the purple deep, and the winds hush'd ;
And the sail flapp'd, and the strong rowers took
Their order'd seats, Kerkolas came, and sat

Beside us. And he spoke of the fair lands
That we had glimpsed in coasting ; and his words,
Made vital by his earnest truth alone,
Were living pictures ; and if aught could be
Awaiting to the faithful story told,
My fancy fired, and lit such colours up
That, could he have beheld them, would have made him
Relive a threefold life. For such is art
Poetic, or our nature, if ye will,
That o'er the many sorrows that we bear
Lifts us up for a moment, as the bow
Over the rainy cloud. Yet in good sooth
Far liefer did I listen to the words
Sober, and simple, than if he had wrought
Gold flowers into the tissue of his tale.
For in his truthful utterance I could trace
Heroic will, that would have made one word
Of his, in peril, or perplexity,
Stronger than clamorous threats, and prayers, and sighs ;
Stronger than pity pleading through her tears.
Slowly the land of Egypt from the waves
Rose up before us ; 'twas at Naucratis
I met again my brother whom I loved.
For I remember'd all our childish days ;
And spake such words in secret to him, as
If he forgave not, he cannot forget ;
Although he loved not honour ; tho' the hours
Dropt thro' the glass too slowly for his thirst
Of passionate delights ; tho' for a while

I knew he would not heed me. Yet my hope
Was strong within me that our mother's love
Had sown good seed in a rebellious heart ;
My father's voice still echoed in his ears.
And when he wax'd faint with his lawless dance ;
And when the flaunting Mænads had gone by,
Miscall'd delights ; when he had drunk that cup,
And found the wine had left but bitter lees,
And he was sick and weary, he would hear
The old tongues calling to him, " Turn again,
My son, the mountaintop may still be scaled ;
Tho' some are gone before thee, turn again ! "

II

But that unconquerable love of home,
That burns ev'n in the hearts of evil men,
At last hath stirr'd us like another youth
Out of that calm, as 'twere of Death, that sleeps
Upon this ancient land of Nile—this land
Of mystery, of magic, and of marvels,
Shadow'd by structures, old as time itself ;
Temples that hold the secrets of all knowledge.
Once more I long to see the waters dance
Thro' the beloved isles ; the blissful shores
Of Hellas, which the olive mountains shade,
Sparkling with crested cities ; where the breath
Of man goes up in voluntary song ;
Where the heart lightens with eternal youth,

And sleepless power ; and even the lowliest tongue
Pours forth the golden, and the peerless sounds,
By which all other sounds on earth to me
Seem as barbaric gongs, and beaten brass,
After the sweetness of a seven-strung lyre.
So we sail'd forth from the low palmy shore ;
And saw the columns of the temples huge
Fall under the dark silent wastes at even ;
Like earth-born giants swallow'd up again.
The westwind blew ; and in seven days we saw
The towering heights of Cyprus sheening up ;
And skirting by Cythera, and by Naxos,
Touch'd sacred Samos, after thirty days
Of prosperous airs. And oh ! it seem'd to me,
After that solemn, hush'd, primeval land,
Its darker shadows, and its fiercer lights,
The life of that fair city, joyous, loud,
The stir of the full mart, the sails that flock'd
Into its harbours laden with the world
Like weary birds, or partings full of life,
The songs that fill'd the air, the mirth that rose
Up from the decks, the many-voiced life,
Seem'd after the weird Nile, and mystic gloom
Of its hoar cities, and their templed wastes,
Like waking from a dream of wanderings
'Mid twilight sepulchres, and scatter'd bones
Of the dead giants, in the sunlit air
And breath of morning. Now with each new day
Yet once again my heart was charm'd, and years

Seem'd to flow back ; or like a river leaping
From cavernous darkness into light of noon,
Had in such moments unimagined bliss ;
I clapp'd my hands, and shouted, Hellas, Hellas !
Beautiful, beautiful !

And it was then,
That Anaktoria yielded to the prayer
Of her Ulysses that she would consent
With me to visit Andros, his own home,
The dwelling of his fathers, dear to him,
As the blue Lesbian bays, and breezy hills,
And viny dales, to me and to my friend.
And so we changed our course ; and with it changed
The elements around us ; for the winds
Of Autumn were upon us, as we sail'd
Into the narrow pass, of evil fame,
Between Eubœa, and the lesser isle,
Into the strait of Andros ; woe betide
Belated fishing boat, or laden bark,
If sudden tempest smite them 'twixt the shores.
And, as we enter'd by the perilous gate ;
On the righthand the inhospitable steep
Of gaunt Caphareus, on the left the beach
And fruitful plains of Andros ; from the west
Rose up a purple wall of thundercloud
Onward, and upward, and, from dismal peaks
And pinnacles, flung down into the deep
Javelins of fire, that clave the gloomy waste ;
And roll'd down in a moment after them

Thunders, the thousandfold triumphant shout,
As of innumerable hosts ; that smote
The crags, and drew such angry answers from them,
That the first echoes met the second peal ;
And so for ever flung against each other
The awful voices never ceased. We sat,
Shelter'd from winds and waters for a while ;
The hand of Anaktoria clasping mine,
And darkness round about us, only broken
By momentary lightnings, seen athwart
Night and the world of waters, shaping to us
The towering surges into very forms
Of angry Titans, showing us withal
The vessel drifting on the shallows fast,
Its head turn'd to the south and east, before
The gathering tempest ; and I whisper'd low ;—
“ O Anaktoria ; once I had a dream
Thou knowest well, of drowning in the deep :
Shall death by waters thus fulfil itself,
As 'twere in sight of home ?” But she replied ;—
“ Alas ! not we alone, weak women, pass
Away for ever ; but the strong man, he
Who but for us might fight against despair,
Challenge the winds and waves, and free himself,
Must perish with us, if he cannot die
To snatch us from the death ; for sure he would
If this were possible ; but it is vain
To think of it ; and sadder still, methinks,”—
And this we utter'd in one voice together,—

“Of all sad things, to think the noblest one
Had ransom'd our frail being with his own !
So let us die together : hark ! 'tis nigh !
'Tis on us !” And a shock like earthquake smote
The vessel's keel, and flung us from our seats.
And in a moment, with the roar of floods
And hurricane, death seized on us ! We knew
No more ; for all was dark to sense and soul,
Ev'n as the night without its lightnings ; nought
But a low murmur compass'd us ; yet fear
And pain had fled away ; if such be death
When it o'ertakes us, better die in youth,
And lapse to such oblivion, than await—
Like the long-suffering oak the frost and hail—
Old age that shreds us piecemeal : but we woke.
Was it a dream ? Or had there been a storm,
And wreck and doom ? Or had the seagods pass'd,
And laid the waters and the winds ? the nymphs
Risen from their twilight chambers, where the blasts,
And tumults, that torment the upper seas,
Are only heard like whispers in a shell,
Or sighings from the woody mountaintops ;
And laid us in their pearly coracles,
And borne us sleeping to a place of rest ?
For all was silent round us ; and the moon
Shone through a vine that rustled near the roof ;
And chequer'd Anaktoria's deathpale face
With quivering light and shade. But lo ! a light
Of a small lamp held in one aged hand,

And in the other an old silver cup :
One of tall stature, and boon aspect, leant
Tenderly o'er me, and a sweet voice spake :
" I am the mother of Kerkolas, child.
Drink of this wine ; for it hath often staid
The doom of the wreck'd seaman, when a night
Like this had flung his bark upon the shoals,
And angry breakers ; drink of it and sleep.
No fiery sparkles mingle with the draught ;
But essences of wild-flowers, and such balms
As lay the tumult in the blood, and soothe
Thus heart and mind ; drink of it ; it shall be
That with to-morrow morn new life is thine :
But he "—she said no more but passed away
With soundless foot ; yet had that little word,
The last word that she spoke, made sleep in vain.
Those words " but he " which broke off suddenly—
Like a waste land trodden at dead of night
By wandering feet that start back from the edge
Of an abyss—left me in fear and pain.
And clear, as in a mirror, I beheld
The silent image of a dreadful thing ;
One stretch'd, as 'twere, in death upon the shore ;
So blench'd his brow, and cheeks, so void of light
His sealed eyes ; in shadow of a rock
He lies beyond the highest watermark ;
And one hand clasps a carkanet I lost
Amid the stormy night. Nearer I gaze ;
Ah yes ! 'tis he, the brave and true ; the one,

Who thought not for himself, till those who clung
About the wreck had saved their lesser lives.
He is the last, and now they call to him.
And now he dives into the roaring sea ;
And now the storm, that had not done its worst
When the crew 'scaped to land, grows mightiest,
And, buffeting in vain, he is borne off
He knows not whither ; sense and thought are lost ;
Sure life itself ; so deathly-true it seemed,
That with a cry I raised myself ; and yearn'd
To follow my own spirit thro' the night,
That with my outer eyes I might belie
Fantastic terrors. Anaktoria woke,
But, ere she spoke, I heard another sound,
A murmur from without, that slowly wax'd
Into clear utterance ; " Gently," said a voice,
" Gently, O friends, if he be yet alive,
So sore bestead, and wounded ; for the sea
That hath not swallow'd us, hath wreak'd itself
In vengeance on him, leaving him to die
Beneath the rock that bruised him, then drew back,
And lacking strength to harm him more, at length
Grew peaceable ; gently, my fellowmen,
Lest ye arouse him suddenly, and then
That shock may be a peril unto death."
I look'd forth in the moonlight ; and I heard
Fulfill'd what in my vision I had seen.
Slowly they reach'd the shadows of the house,
And shelter of his home ; sadly came forth

The aged mother, scattering hasty tears,
And drying them as quickly—'twas no time
To mourn ; she knew not yet if that dread pause
'Twixt life and death would lapse to one or other—
But I could weep for him and her ; could weep
For Anaktoria, whose strong spirit bow'd
Before the sorrow of so great a loss ;
Yea, weep with them,—or was it for myself?
Myself—I started at the very thought,
And put it by—no more—The morrow morn,
And many morrows after that, the house
Was steep'd in silence, lest a sound, a step
Too rude, a syllable too harshly spoken,
Should be an arrow in the heart we loved.
How shall I tell what loving strife arose
Between me and my friend, each to outdo
The other in the work of piety?
The daily services, the nightly watch
Taken alternately, till the dim eyes
Began to shimmer—as the star of dawn
Before returning daybreak whispers, faint
As the first rustle of the breath of morn
Among the myrtles—usher'd welcome words,
And the self-conscious soul. And when he spoke
It was to answer our unutter'd words
And yearning wish : smiling he said, “ I know
All that ye long to learn ; the wonder writ
Upon your brows, and burning in your eyes,
Is not altogether for my sake,

And for the dying, and nigh quenched spark
That ye have nursed into a vital flame
By patient lovingkindness ; which, full sure,
Except for that, had vanish'd ere its time.
She seeks to know how 'tis that Life and Death
Are reconciled ; how 'tis the hungry sea
That snatch'd ye hath repented ; how ye drown'd,
And lapsed into oblivion, and the dark,
And yet stand here the light of this old home.
'Twas that the sea that overleapt the bark,
After it grounded, felt not yet the storm
At its full strength, although it swept ye off.
On either hand the shoals were passable
By caution and by struggling ; for the space
Of a brief minute ye were overcome.
And while I held thee up, O Sappho, two,
Of all our stalwart oarsmen the two best,
Lifted thee, Lady Anaktoria,
Above the blinding surf." But here he paused,
And for a while the lifelight in his eyes
Paled as a misty star ; no more he seemed
To see or heed our presence ; and his voice
Sank to a whisper ; but I heard his words
Faint and yet clear ; none other heard but me.
"I would not trust thee, O my treasure, O
My Sappho ; no, to any hands but mine ;
Thou didst not know it, haply wilt not know.
But, whatsoever shall befall us two,
And if this sea shall spare, or spare me not,

Or other seas shall be my sepulchre,
This know I, dear, that I have saved a life
More precious than all others." Then again
The lifelight lit his eyes, self-conscious thought
Rang in his voice ; "When I had yielded up
My precious burthen into other hands,
Again I made for the dismayed wreck ;
For there I knew less precious jewels lay,
Yet of great price : but, while I search'd for them,
The winds and sea rose into tameless might ;
And in a moment every plank and spar,
Scatter'd and rent, left me more lost than they
Amid the flood blinded and without hope,
The flood that bore me onward without life,
And left me so ; until I heard again
Low voices round me ; and knew not if I,
A shadow, heard the whispering of the Shades."
These last words told us only what we knew
From the brave men who found him nigh the rock,
So that I heard them not ; for other thoughts
Took hold of me ; quickly I call'd to mind
My vision and my anguish ; and I thought
There must be something betwixt him and me
Stronger than space and time, to show me thus
Truth's self upon the blackness of the night.
Was it the last thought that possess'd his soul
Ere he sank down in death—that he had saved
My life, the all to him—and did my soul
Go forth to meet his, and thus all he did

And suffer'd was made visible to me ?
I knew not ; but the weird experience
Led me to search the inner deeps of Life ;
And sound for things till then unseen, unknown,
Or thought of by the wisest of this world.

III

I said the Furies, whose destroying fires
Had scorch'd my frame, had wellnigh wither'd up
All memory of the past ; and whatsoever
Cross'd me at moments, like a stormy gleam
No sooner seen than darken'd, grew at length
More like a mist, that fancy shapes to life
Than aught of actual ; memory of a dream,
Or some lost day remember'd in a dream.
But now in lonely moments I began
To wonder at myself, and started back
From my own musings : was it possible
That the old madness stirr'd within me still ?
Were the pale embers, that within me lay,
Rekindling into life ? I knew not how ;
But all of the old sorrow that remain'd,
By little and by little, with each day
Changed into sweetness ; voices of despair
To a new song ; from dust of hopeless death
Sprang up spontaneous raptures, as first flowers
From wintry snows ; my step grew light again,
My utterance musical ; was my flown God,

Or he I took for such, who sway'd me first,
And led me the wild dance I knew not where,
Breathing upon me now? But, when I strove
To raise the wondrous shape I look'd on then,
My eyes were blind; I could not see it more.
But in its stead there pass'd before my sight
Majestic manhood, wise humanity,
Heroic strength and stature, steadfast will,
Patient endurance; all for ever warm'd
By smiles of lovingkindness from a heart,
That, whether in its grief, or in its joy,
Cast light around it as a central sun.
One, not a cunning actor masking guile,
But robed in light of honour; bold of speech,
To whisper truth into the ear of kings;
As one might feel a slumbering lion's teeth,
Or rush unfearing through a burning fire.
And yet his life is full of gentle acts;
Whose virtue, better than all glory, spreads,
Like odour wandering forth from unseen flowers;
Like silver ripples in a quiet spring;
Like tuneful circles shed from one sweet sound,
Out of the loving centre of his heart,
And wields magnetic influences, strong
For good on earth within his little sphere;
As the great forces that hold up the world!
Ah! surely in that image I beheld,
The while I saw him not, the king of men;
As though I saw his shadow on the wall.

Yet, gazing on the picture, I recoil'd.
For now I knew the radiance from my heart,
That show'd it me, was kindled at his own.
And, though it minded me of my own self
In days before, as lightnings from the east
Shine to the west, I turn'd to whence it sprang,
And saw it was no reflex of the past,
But a new love! Ah me! why was I spared?
Ah! was bright change, and sweet companionship,
That solaced my sad thought, as first spring days
The wintry earth, to end in this again,
Another doom, and hopeless death in life,
Another desolation? Woe is me:
Where shall I fly? I cannot fly from him,
And, if I could, I cannot hide myself.
Methinks, the still cold deeps beneath the sea
Were fitter for this vexed heart of mine;
And to forget for ever, than to live
And look upon the sun through hopeless tears.
Long stood I on the selfsame spot, and clothed
In trouble, as a cloud; as one who, struck
By summer storm, hears not the voice of one
On his righthand, by reason of the wind.
But when the tempest in my heart had lull'd,
Hope spoke again, and in a tongue I knew.
Faint, as a whisper, had I heard it first;
I, and none other; now it came to me,
Clear as a harpstring sounded in the dark.
"I would not trust thee, O my treasure, O

My Sappho ; no, to any hands but mine.
Thou didst not know it, haply wilt not know.
But, whatsoever shall befall us two,
And if this sea shall spare, or spare me not,
Or other seas shall be my sepulchre,
This know I, dear, that I have saved a life
More precious than all others." Mighty Gods !
I cried in my great wonder, " am I sure ?
Am I but netted into other toils,
Mark for still sharper arrows, or have ye
Quicken'd the wither'd buds of my first joy,
To make them fullblown blossoms, and a crown
Of glory, and of bliss supreme ; and weave
Amid the roses laurel, oak, and palm,
And in the stead of widowhood and woe,
Cross passions, and dis sever'd purposes,
Of unrealities, and hopeless dreams,
Love, twofold, sure, and strong, twin hearts in one ?
Yet was I changed ; as one, who once hath launch'd
A helmless bark into the trackless seas,
Charm'd by the sunshine, and the azure calm ;
And spread all sail without or skill, or fear ;
A foolish child, unmindful of his fate ;
And madly flown against the rising waves
That cast him on a rock : but evermore
He shudders at the terror he hath braved,
And fears though all be still. No more I sought
To dare my peril ; now it seem'd indeed
A fatal pastime thus to bathe my sense

In that vain beauty, which, unless the heart
Look through the eyes, and heal the wounds they make,
Is but a mighty, and a cruel king,
That takes us captives without hope of change.
How often now, when I had heard him speak
Of far-off lands, bold ventures, noble acts,
I fled away to wander by the shore !
Not, as of old, to picture forth anew
A living form till it grew twice alive :
But, as a harper out of many notes
Of bass and treble, sweet and strong, upbuilds
Melodious symphony, I strove to link
Brave thoughts and tender, bold and gentle deeds,
Into one fair concert, his noble soul :
And then, although I thought not of his face,
It shone unbid, pure symbol of the whole :
And straight all other beauty seem'd a mask
That show'd no good, or hid the false away.

IV

How long my weak heart might have worn its chain ;
How soon the brave man might have arm'd himself
To cast out fear, I know not ; but, meanwhile,
Love bore our embassies to willing ears.
For Anaktoria, whose wakeful eyes
Had laugh'd at my vain secrecy, and his ;
Much as the fowler marks the simple bird,

That flies away to wile him from her nest,
Then turns unto it by another way,
Heard and gave counsel unto each in turn :
Till doubt, the nightmist, hope, the star of morn,
Both drown'd in cloudless sunrise. For each heart
Wax'd certain of its fellow, as if each
Had been sweet notes that sing in unison ;
Albeit not yet the sweet words of the song
Had sounded ; and the days were fleeting by.
And, while we dream'd, full many a busy hand
Had stirr'd the echoes with the daily sound
Of clashing anvil, and of driven bolt,
Of plane, and saw, and mallet ; and once more
A gallant bark, if not a pleasure-berge,
Rock'd on the waters ; and the day was come,
As many a day hath been, and still must be,
Itself a minute picture of all time,
Of sorrow cross'd with joy, of hopes with fears,
Of ever-eager youth, of mournful age,
Of tears, and laughter, welcomes, and farewells.
The breeze was fair ; nor loud enough to hush
The tiny wavelets, rippling on the sands,
And tuneful as a song, that seem'd to join
Its music to our voices, as we stood
Under the porch, remurmuring o'er and o'er
The same sweet syllables ; and sad, the while
The blithe airs gambol'd with our braidless locks.
And she, the aged mother, stretch'd her arms
Above our heads in silence ; and I saw

That far light in her sad uplifted eyes,
That seem'd to reach into eternity.

V

Swiftly the vessel clave the morning sea,
The spring winds, breathing from the balmy isles,
Scarce rippled the blue waters ; and the birds
Flew round us, in their way from land to land.
The air was thick with odours as with light ;
And far-off headlands, steep'd in azure, mock'd
Themselves, as in a mirror ; and he came
Laughing to me, and said ;—“ Come hither quick,
And I will show thee how, this blissful morn,
Things, that dwell under the dark waters, quit
Their homes, to quaff the warm air ; and are fain
To take their pastime like the winged birds.
And then he led me to the peaked prow ;
And, leaning o'er, he show'd me silently
A dolphin close along the vessel's side,
Nigh where the seafoam, parted by the keel,
Went by in silver eddies. As it surged
Into the sunlight, a bright rain of gems
Fell from its flanks ; and in a moment more
It follow'd the fair treasures, and was lost ;
Then came and went, and came and went again,
And, nearer and still nearer to the bark,
The dolphin gambol'd ; and I joy'd to see ;

Till, in a moment, heedless of all ill,
I overpoised myself in my desire.
I felt that I was falling : Ah ! great heavens !
Once more the dream of waters ! Oh ! what thoughts
Rush'd thro' that moment ! in a moment more—
Had I not fallen into seanympths' arms—
The swift ship had gone over me at once,
And tomb'd me in dark waters, with no dirge
But the seamurmur, and the low sweet wind.
And yet it needed not the bitter cry
That sprang from my despair to bring him near.
That ever-watchful eye, and guardian arm
Were by me, and around, and when I woke
From a short swoon, 'twas on his breast I lay.
But in that interval each of us knew,
Better than words could paint or music peal,
All that lay hidden in the other's heart,
Ray'd from the eyes, and moving on the lips :
Love signalling its own immortal life !
But Anaktoria, bending o'er us both
Stood like a royal Fate, and thus she spake :—
“ Surely the life twice saved is due to him
Who hath twice saved it ; surely he, who saved
What else were lost, is lord of it for aye ;
Who shall gainsay him ? Let me speak for both.
And, if I am not just, avenge yourselves.
Take her, Kerkolas, take him, Sappho dear ;
And yet I give what is not mine to give ;
For thou art his, O Sappho, he is thine.”

We touch'd Miletus on that selfsame day,
And on the morrow morning we were wed.

VI

The hours, the days are fled, the years are gone ;
My parents dead, my brothers far away.
I might have haunted the old house alone.
For, of the many friends that once were mine,
The most were fickle, and the faithful few ;
And they were wed : but he was here with me ;
And loved to be where I had loved to live
Rather than Andros. Then his mother died
Who was the light of his ancestral hall ;
And now beneath an unfamiliar roof
He found more bliss than in the ancient home
Where she was not : another voice is heard ;
Between us two another face is seen,
A little sweet face looks up to us both,
And smiles on each in turn ; and we look down
Upon it, as a mirror magical,
Wherein each, gazing on it, sees us both.
Kleis is her name, the key that can unlock
The hearts of both, if ever they grow hard ;
But that may never be while she is by.
The hours, the days are fled, the years are gone ;
He went and came ; the springtime saw him part.
Ofttimes our Lesbos saw him not again
Till Summer ended ; first I shed some tears

At parting ; but the days of welcome sped
After farewell so surely, that I came
To think of his return, as of the dawn
After a sunset, and my heart grew strong.

VII

One Autumn night, when we had piled the hearth ;
And the old rooftree reddened with the fire,
And Kleis had lean'd her cheek upon my knees,
With wakeful eyes watching her father's lips ;
He told us of the sea, its glories, wonders,
And perils, while we heard it roar without
A friendly symphony to that deep voice,
And weather'd frame ; and gusty tempests shook
The last leaves from the old vine on the wall.
And shrieks rose in the pauses of the wind,
And were caught off again ; whether they were
Of homeless wanderers, or of drowning men ;
And I sat pale. Oh ! sweet and solemn nights,
Better than songs and purple festivals,
And banquets of the proud. There as he sat
Over against me, like a king of men,
And the quick flashing of the firelight smote
Upon his face, stormbeaten, but serene ;—
And show'd those kind deep eyes beneath his brows
Knotly and dark ; I said unto myself ;—
“ Behold, how fair a thing the heart of Man
Temper'd to peace, and even with itself,

And strung in concord with good things and ill,
For peaceful sufferance made the latter good.
'Tis as the calm glow of this hearth, that streams
Into the outer dark ; an evening beam
Pour'd thro' the loopholes of a warlike tower,
Or down the laden vineyard's turfy way ;
And, tho' the frame be wreck'd by time, and care,
Looks through it, as the starlight thro' the storm,
And leafless boughs." There as he sat, and spake,
Of cities, and of peoples, fortunes, fears,
Shipwrecks, and perils of far voyages,
Or joyous ventures betwixt isle and isle ;
Methought I saw Odysseus come to life ;
Or the great soul of that primeval king
Set in like limbs ; so knit he must have been ;
Such his grave aspect, and his kindling eye,
And towering brows ; such his unquailing heart,
In patience so long-suffering ; but in strength
To lift himself, if need be, over ill
Swift as an eagle ; but, within, devout
And tender thoughts, that when the trampling feet
Of daily cares were heard no more, would wake
Clear as the bubbling of a spring by night
Along a dusty way. How sweet his smile !
How rich the treasure of his spirit, stored
With wisdom, and with musings ; tissues woven
Thro' many days of iron, and of gold,
Luck and mischance, real woe, and real mirth ;
Fortune that pined, and sorrow that rejoiced,

And piteous joy, and laughter-stirring grief ;
And memories of his own as fair as song.
His life, as 'twere, a hymn of praise, with acts
For music, dying into cadences
Of self-approval, sweeter than the tongues
Of Corybantes, as they bear along
The Mother of the Earth. And, looking on him,
His spirit seem'd to lay my troubled thoughts ;
As a strong wind that, setting from the land,
Beats back the eager flood. Oh ! I was proud
Thus to be school'd by one, whose faithful words
Were echoes of his deeds ; to hear, and learn
The proper notes of magnanimity.
And when he ceased his changeful histories,
And leant his cheek upon his hand, and fix'd
His dreaming eyes upon the dying fire ;
Out of the ruddy embers shaping things
That he had seen in valiant days of youth ;
Whether it were wild sunsets barr'd with storm ;
Mountain, or angry shore, or ragged steep ;
Or burning isle, or desert rough with wrecks ;
Or piled merchandise upon the wharves
Of seaward cities basking in the sun ;
Or multitudinous capital with towers,
Through whose deep heart the flames of ruin roll'd ;
Or crimson rivers out of Etna's heart :
Then I sat silent seeing all he saw.
But chiefly when he said : " How hard is Life !
I sleep with toil, and dream of toil to be.

I climb the rock of danger for the nest
Of peace, but find it not ; and long long use
Steels me to front the stormy elements
Of chance and change more joyfully than calm.
And yet I seek not riches, nor the springs
Of pleasure, who can sleep beneath a rock,
And drink the rivulet from it, or wildgrape
That overhangs it, as 'twere Samian wine ;
And swallow rude bread with the mountaineer.
Enough for me if I shall live to bring,
Upon the day that little Kleis is wed,
What shall suffice to dower the little one
Who slumbers on thy knee ; and thee, dear wife,
Something to pillow thine old age upon ;
Who from thy birth wert framed too fearfully
For this rough world." Ah ! then my heart was wrung.
Ah ! then, methought, I had been deaf, and dumb ;
And blind through all those years, while he had fought
With giants for our sakes, and had prevail'd.
But, had he fallen in the next emprise,
Would not those words, like spectres in the night,
Come back to me, and drag my conscious heart
Down to a living death ? So I arose ;
And, bowing down before him, clasp'd his knees ;
And in a voice of anguish, " Part no more ;
Or thou wilt leave behind thee tears and sighs,
Able to cloud thy hopes, and dim thy weal ;
And make farewell not blessing, but a dirge.
And now, I mind me, while thou wert away,

There came one from Miletus ; and he laid
A sealed packet in my hand for thee,
Well nigh forgotten ; take it, there it is
Hid in the casket by thee ;” but my heart
Was prophet to his tongue while he unwrapt
The writing, and then read ; “ From Anaktoria
Greeting ; weep with me ; woe is in our house.
For Death hath taken him who gave me life ;
And left me heir to all, which were as nought,
Were not my sorrow temper’d with this thought,
That I have power to work my will to thee,
Which first was his ; to dower thee with such wealth,
Tho’ less than the full measure of thy meed ;
Yet all enough to crown thee with the peace
The due of rich deservings ; peace at last—
A clear sun setting past a stormy sea—
Peace to the homeless heart that pines for rest ;
Peace to the widow’d heart that pines at home ;
And peace to him, who from the shades turns back,
To see that better flower of gratitude ;
The bliss of loving hearts he left behind.”
Thus Anaktoria wrote. Kerkolas read :
And, bowing down his head in silence, seem’d
As though he listen’d to the roaring sea
Without, that rose on sudden angry gusts,
As if to chide him for ingratitude ;
Or snarl him forth to one last deadly strife.
Then whisper’d he, “ I know not if this gold ;
Or perils of the deep, ev’n if foreknown ;

Or all the sweet songs that I cannot hear,
When winds and waves are loud 'twixt me and thee ;
Or little Kleis stretching her arms to me ;
Or all at once would stay me from the use
Of long long years, and love of daring deeds.
But now I see the first tears in those eyes,
At thought of that which they could brook before,
Or speed with hopeful smiles, and happy words,
My heart is weaker than a windless sail.
Thou hast prevail'd, 'tis ended ; and henceforth
All my seafaring shall be done with thee,
In voyages, where hazard there is none,
In a gay bark which I will build for thee,
Fair as the wreck at Andros. If sometimes
We sail, like butterflies, or fearless birds,
'Twixt isle and isle, thro' summer and light air,
Mostly we'll glide 'twixt Lesbian bay and bay,
In search of pleasant moments ; and abide
Till even, tented o'er by flowering boughs,
Wooing the nymphs to listen to thy songs,
Then homeward sail beneath the summer moon."
Oh ! then I rose ; oh ! then I took my harp.
I took my harp ; I sang a wondrous song,
Unprompted rhythms, a pæan of delight,
Welcomes for aye ! farewell to all farewells.
And then those eyes, unused to tears, would shed
A few swift drops, like dews that glance by moonlight.
Nearer he came ; he took me by the hand ;
And then he said in tenderest tones ; " Dear heart,

Sing it again, oh ! sing it o'er again ;
Such moments do I love ; for, on the tide
Of thy sweet melodies, the years of old,
Like stars of sunset scatter'd on the sea,
Flow back ; and sorrow's self looks beautiful,
As icy summits drown'd in dews of rose."
And then my heart was jocund with the thought
That one so lock'd in armour could be stirr'd.
And "Not to us, oh ; not to us," I cried,
"Who live with shadows in this sunny world ;
Who sit apart, deaf to the sound of things,
And shun all strife with scorn, front Power with pride,
Dreamers at noon, rebellious sons of Time,
Weavers of wind, frail children of the Muse,
Who drink the hueless spring of Castaly,
And call it nectar. Oh ; not ev'n to us ;
Who with the curtain of a rainbow screen
The dull grey cloud of Life ; and, when that veil
Is lifted up, and shows the crags and mist
Naked and cold, we fly away in fear :
Who coldly turn from forms most beautiful ;
Or, seeing, scorn them as familiar things,
Taking the phantoms in our hearts for more :
Who mourn because the harvest of delight,
Reap'd in the spring, leaves summer without fruit,
And autumn bleak, and winter without light :
Who thirst for joy yet cannot taste the fruit.
Not ev'n to us, poor Poets, strange and proud,
Leaves in the whirlwind, flame before the wind,

Extreme, unhonour'd, slight, inconstant, vain,
Hath Nature, mighty in benevolence,
Kind Nature stinted a few living hours.
We are consoled if we can thus prevail
O'er stalwart strength, and draw heroic tears ;
If we can hang the dusty rock with vines ;
And set the wilderness with isles of green,
Whence heavy-laden hearts may pluck the grapes ;
And drink the spring that bubbles in the waste.
We are not comfortless ; if ye, the kings
Of action, can forget your cares, and lull
Your overwakeful sorrows as we sing,
And live again triumphant days of Youth,
Or turn to mercy out of ways of ill.
The giant of the forest bows his head
And thousand years unto the summer wind.
The gnarled strength of man may be subdued ;
And yield to simple words, and silver song.
Nor will a strengthless woman live in vain,
If thoughts and passions, working change on earth,
Made musical by one melodious voice,
Are heard in echoes when their days are gone :
Or, like a garland of all-colour'd blooms,
Bound in one loving spirit's golden cord,
Breathe sweetly when the living leaves are sere,
Speak when she is not heard, and vanquish time,
Death and oblivion, and go down the flood
Of ages, wing'd into futurity
By breath of words that have no other soul !”

ALCÆUS

(LESBOS)

I breathed the coming of the flowery Spring.—ALCÆUS.

Happy bridegroom, thou art blest
With blisses far beyond the rest,
For thou hast won
Thy chosen one,
The girl thou lovest best.

SAPPHO.

I

LONG days the banded armies of the air
Had fought against the Spring; until the heart
Pined, and grew fainter with the hope of her.
But yestereve the cloudy curtain rose
On a far vision full of blessedness.
A long line in the West of happy light;
A hush'd smooth Ocean, solemn and divine,
Gold fire, translucent gold; and out of it
The warm airs flew like Angels to the earth,
Wafting my cheek with passing plumes. I rose;
I breathed delight; and with adoring eyes,
Far thorough that ambrosial element
I wander'd, seeking, what my heart had lost,

Hopes, fancies, jocund thoughts, and songs of joy.
I stretch'd my arms, as to a glorious God
In parting seen ; imploring him with tears
To stay his flight, till I could reach him too,
That I too, I, might sail upon that sea
With the bright company that follow'd him
Whose gladness was immortal ! The sweet wind
Sang in mine ears, to-morrow, oh ! to-morrow.
And, with that answer from myself to self,
I lean'd my head upon my arm, and look'd
Across the purple air, and glooming vale
Into the ebbing glory, till deep sleep
Came down on me, unbroken ; till the Morn,
Sprang like a virgin fountain from the East—
So many days we had not seen the sun—
And dash'd my face with gold drops as I lay,
That woke me with their touch. It seem'd a moment ;
And lo ! my love was answer'd, and my prayer ;
And all things were rejoicing. Ev'n the dews
Throbb'd exultation, answering to the call
Of forest pipes, whose mingled melodies
Rose like a rising tide, that simmers clear
'Mid rosy shells ; or with their sweetness made
A tempest ; as when sudden gusts of dawn
Swoop on a garden plot, and snatch away
Rich spoil of dewy odours in their haste,
Whirling them all together. And I saw
Under a green arch of a hedge of rose,
Whose sweetbriers fill'd the turfwalks with their breath,

The awakening champaign, and the lark above
Singing of things to be ; and stepping forth
I saw the orchards rippling in the light.
The lily of the valley wagg'd its head,
Delirious with the bliss ; and all the soul
Of silver dawns of other early days,
Of earliest springs, a thousand years ago,
Rose on its sighs ; and the faint primroses
Breathed inexpressible sweet thoughts ; that seem'd,
When I could bind them for a moment's span,
To waft the freshness of some mighty morn
When Death shall be no more ; and violets
Held in their fairy amethystine bowls
The waters turn'd to wine ; and crimson lilies
Seem'd lamps of chisell'd ruby, borne aloft
To catch the first spark from the Summer's eye.

II

And now, when all the isle was full of flowers,
And the far slopes were fresh with forest green,
Citharus, my youngest brother—whose kind heart
Thrill'd less to sound of song and clash of arms
Than homely faith and truth—led home his bride,
A daughter of Methymna, a soft-eyed
And gentle-hearted girl—their hopes were one.
Ev'n as transparent waters, skyward flung
Up from a fresh fount's heart, fall back again,

His happy thoughts return'd to him again
In her clear voice—a sweet monotony
That never tired—their souls, like mirror'd mirrors,
Made never-ending answers to each other.
The staid Andromeda had fashioned her
In arts and graces, that were so transfused
Into her inmost being, they shed thereout
A sweetness like the breath of hidden flowers ;
More loveable than if they wreathed the brows
Of stronger genius with a heart less pure.
And, though her limbs were slight, her stature less
Than majesty, her modest motions left
In the beholder's eye, when she was gone,
Fair traces like the waving of a flower ;
A secret charm of subtle magistry.
And if her voice was low, as rivulets are
When winds are still, its earnest tenderness
Made it an oracle ; and Sappho saw
No fault in her, whom cunning Nature framed
Of so fine woof, that the world's eye, half blind
With looking on the lily and the rose,
Know nothing of it ; and those only find
Who seek in quiet shadows, and are fond
Of her least handiwork. Her trim robe knit
Her delicate ankles with such comely grace
That all her tiny paces you might count
And time to music ; beauty in her soul
Made that pale face, that common eyes would miss,
Above all beauty of proportion, as

The marble form, in its proportions pure,
 Excels all living types except the soul.

* * * *

III

That morning I had writ a gay new song ;
 And on the plumes of mine own winged words
 Felt lifted as an eagle toward the sun.
 “And oh !” I cried, “if I could grasp the glory
 Of Power but for a day, to lay it down
 The next ! I should have tasted that I thirst for.
 I should have heard men’s living voices shout
 My name ; and lightnings of rejoicing eyes
 Would flash around me. But the golden dreams,
 The silent raptures of the lonely bard,
 Are but the sunmists on a deathcold peak
 That fall back on him ; and a deathless name
 Is as the thunder from beyond the sea,
 Heard out of the far future. Cannot the fire
 Of this tumultuous being, which I feel,
 Instead of flickering round my harpstrings, strike
 At once, like lightning, on the hearts of men ;
 And mould them suddenly into such shapes
 As I desire ? Doth not one day of triumph
 Outweigh the breath of cycles pour’d into
 The deaf ears of the dead ? What is a name.
 An ancestry, the customary honours
 That lift us o’er the world, if all we gain
 Is but the fickle reverence of those

That hate us while they fear? Who, if they serve us
The best fruits of the earth, and build our homes,
And weave our garments, would, to-morrow noon,
If the Fates smiled on Envy, take back all ;
And more than they have given us, or can give,
Our breath itself? Who would not only stint us
To their black broth ; but in their darkness make
The poet and the lawgiver cupbearers
To their foul pride ; but take from us the food
Of knowledge, while they cannot taste themselves.
And if 'twere possible, would quench the sun
Of genius, and the prodigalities
Of Nature trample underfoot ; and dance
With idiot glee upon the ruin'd world !
Blunt, edgeless weapons for us or against ;
Waves to and fro driv'n by the restless winds ;
That in another day may overwhelm
The Idol of to-day—but stop—perchance
The floodtide of their favour, upbearing us,
May set us on a rock, whence all their storms
May fail to unfix us ever. Then, oh ! then,
From that high place we may behold and laugh
To scorn their baffled onsets ; by and by
The boiling waves will lessen, and subside
To their original calm ; and they will come
And kiss the feet of the Invincible
Who humbled them, as, in the quiet sea,
The little ripples lap the iron base
Of the great rock that overshadows them.

And yet what do I say? Oh! Heaven, forbid
That I should mock the poor man with my tongue,
Or scorn him in my heart; the eldest-born
Of Nature is an honourable man;
Whose daily duties he hath not to seek
By guesswork, like the rich man's boasted toils;
Who stay'd by patience cannot miss the mark.
Oh! holy is the patience of the poor;
That from his stubborn acre wins his life,
And thanks the Gods for it; say, hath he time
For guilt, for sins, that in the Courts of Kings
Are born of sultry moments, that throw up
From some small seed sunn'd by unnatural sloth—
Some tiny seed that in the fields would die
Under the frosty winds—a hundred arms
That knit together into darkest shade,
And stifle Nature, and shut out the light;
What space hath he to wander from the Right?
To play with perils that distort the soul;
To bathe in passions that exhaust the heart;
To feed himself with pleasures, like the meats
Trick'd for their taste whose palsied senses sleep,
Who never see the sunrise? If his lips
Are silent; if he paints no love with words;
While poets dream by lamplight of the morn;
Dream that they feel what they have never known;
He lives and feels a life, like Nature's own,
Steadfast and true. By him the daily face
Of Nature is beheld with daily love

Unconscious ; till behind some prison's bars
He sees his sacred mother torn from him.
He sees, and haply for the first time knows
She was his mother—oh ! how dear to him—
And wonders at her loveliness, and weeps,
And pines as only he can pine—and dies.
Oh ! no ; it is the currish, shameless cit
I hate ; the alternate man of shouts and sneers,
Whelpt of ungodly priests, and bloody kings ;
With soul, encased in smouldering soot, and slime,
The rogue who being what stronger rogues have made him
Is proud of infamy—and Pride in rags
Is Evil, naked as the beggar's sore,
A weed most rampant where nought grows beside—
Is proud of infamy, and scoffs the thought
Of honesty, as honest men a rogue.
With whom to be a fool is not to steal—
To be a simpleton is not to lie.
I hate his godless heart, and lawless tongue,
And cruel hands that tear like lion's claws ;
Less delicate in shedding human blood
Than slaughtering of bullocks. The dull mob,
Where each man, hearing with his ass's ears
The universal hubbub, takes the roar
Of many cowards for his own brave voice.
Like evil children, emulous of folly,
They would chip sculptured marble with rough stones.
Knaves, they would steal, and sell the stars of Heaven,
If only they were silverheaded nails ;

Or melt the sacred strings of Orpheus' lyre
To buy a feast of beans. And if they thought
There was a heaven of gold above their heads—
(For them a grain of knowledge more than folly
Leads straight to madness) they would fling up flints
To graze off fragments from the epicycle.
Look at yon smith, with hair like matted horsetails,
And hands that are less horny than his soul ;
His grimy forehead pearl'd with sweat and dust,
Swart giant of the anvil, King of brutes ;
True head, and type of vulgar violence,
Who with the selfsame brawn that thunders down
The hammer on the anvil, jovially
Would pound the world to powder ; splinter shrines ;
Fling brands into the carven sanctuaries ;
And fire the precious palaces ; that he
Might see the riches that he cannot reach
Burst off in sparks of ruin o'er the land ! ”

IV

Needs must I own ambition is a flame
Blown by the winds of Pride, that spareth not
Things lovely or things good ; but ravins thro'
The pleasant places we have built ourselves,
The quiet gardens, and the pleasurehouses
Of fancy, sweeping all things from its path ;
Till it hath made a desert where it stands.
And, when all things are wasted, ev'n the fire

That fed upon them, the dark smoke of ruin
Goes up, and casts its cloudlike shadows down.
Ah me ! I knew not, when I sang of old
Of beauty and of valour ; nectarous draughts
Of mirth, convivial converse, noble aims ;
The majesty of brave men, the dark eyes
And charming smile of youth ; that aught, beyond
Imagination, and its godlike shapes,
Was wanting to this world to make of it
Elysium. My own visions bore me up,
Like wings, above low fears, and homely cares :
Till on that fatal day when first I heard
The voice, and saw the form of Myrsilus ;
His proud smile and his dark triumphant eye.
Still present seems the moment, when I pass'd
The temple of the Muses, whence I came,
My robe still scatter'd with the leaves and flowers
Of the spring garlands I had offer'd there.
With downward vision dreaming on I came ;
Descending slowly, by the marble stair.
When lo ! it seem'd a nobler than the Gods
Of sculptur'd marble rose before me—he,
The chief of men, with hymns, and banners borne
Onward to power—that day he was proclaim'd
Our ruler, and the sudden glory burst
My gates of dream, and flooded my whole soul
Like morning light with wonder. On he came
With acclamation ; four white horses drew
His chariot ; and he rose to greet the welcome

Of thousands upon thousands, like the God
Who sways the waters, and his dauntless aspect,
His swift and fervent utterance took the hearts
Of all that multitude. His dark locks shook
In the young May-wind ; and from forth his eye
The restless laughter, born of secret scorn,
Play'd fearlessly before the cloud of men,
That love to look on evil robed in pride ;
And under the gay leopard's spotted skin
See not his lurking malice. In that eye
Lay treason, as a dragon in the sun,
To spring upon them, when their careless strength,
That now was knit together in his aid,
Should be stretch'd out in slumber. As he spoke,
The bursting of the popular acclaim
Lifted him from the earth, like thunders borne
From hill to hill ; nay, at that very moment,
As tho' to make a very God of him,
A storm, with lightning rolling from behind,
Made giant music from the inland heights.
He waved his jovian locks ; and made his eyes,
Lifted to heaven in his impassion'd, pure,
And sacred love of liberty, appear
As though they kindled at that mighty thought,
In common with the laughing earth and air,
The winged clouds, the glad and boundless seas,
And bade the Immortal witness to his words !
Alas ! at sight of that magnificence,
My nature changed ; as on that fair Spring day

The blue serenity and golden calm
Were burst up by the tempest. In me grew
Far other passion than the simple love
Of music, and of beauty—who was I?
Tho' flattering tongues of loving friends might fill
Mine ears with endless praise; though I should strive
At noble sports and warlike games; could hurl
My javelin with the hunters; could affront
The curly heads of the rebellious seas
And toss them from me; though I ran as swift
As rivulets whose frostfeters are unbound;
Could wield all arms, and dance the Pyrrhic measures
To clang of beaten shield; and sing as well
As larks at morn: what, though I might do all
As well as I could sing unto the lyre?
What even then were all? Here was a man
Youthful as I; far stronger, who could chain
The manyheaded monster, and make calm
Revenge and envy, insolence and hate,
With flowing words, like smooth oil on the waves;
And with his large eyes flashing in the sun,
His beaten breast, and waving arms, and lip
'Twixt laughter and defiance, he could tame
Lions about to spring; and make them crouch
Before him, like an Orpheus! Who was I?
That fatal day I should have slept a sleep
Deep as enchanter's rod, or wizard's charm,
Or aconite could drown me. Who was I?
A Marsyas beside Apollo's self;

A cupbearer before the brow of Jove
In sight of Myrsilus. If I could win
A gentle ear to listen to my song,
Lycus, or Atthis, or Erinna—boys
Eager and faithful ; girls whose faith is love—
Yet who was I ? For he could brandish fate
In his vulcanic arms, and weld the world
According to his will ; and make the tongues
Of countless others like or unlike him ;
Roll acclamation as the banded seas,
That, when the stormy winds are tyrannous,
Lift up their voices in a thunder-song !
That day was past when I had worshipp'd him,
Or envied ; yet 'twas but a year ago.
And now my heart was fill'd with fear and hate,
At thought of all the evil he had done.

V

I ran down to the shore to breathe the winds,
With flown hair, and with parted lips ; my heart
Plumed with the pride of youth, my mind a tumult
Of undefined hopes, in which no fear
Mingled at all. I pass'd the schoolhouse gate,
And peep'd in with the gracious air of one
Now come to years mature, who had put off
His childish things. Deserted were the courts ;
But my old master sat before the door
Of his own home ; he too was quaffing there

The spirits of morning, with uncover'd head ;
Whose white hairs flowing down his shoulders once
Were dark as mine. He call'd me by my name ;
He took my hand, and spake with gentle tone :
“ I saw thee passing ; and the memory of thee,
And all thy ways, came over me at once.
For I do note the attributes of them
I discipline—the form and spirit remain
Drawn on the tablet of my heart, like sandmarks
Left by the rippling shallows on the beach—
And know, my boy, I early mark'd thee out
For one whom curious Nature set apart,
And lifted o'er thy fellows ; made thee tread
With those swift steps, that oftener lead to sorrow,
Than to glory ; listen to me ; for two hearts
Battle within thy bosom, love, and pride.
They may not rule together ; if the one
Show thee the harmonies of this great world
We live and move in—colour, form, and music—
And if thy nimble wit enable thee
To fix, and to compare the diverse virtues
Of those around thee ; pride is not content
With wonder only ; thou must rule and guide them.
And few are strong enough—and only those
Whose steely texture hath no golden threads
Of tenderness wove with it—to subdue
Wills strong as are their own : thus the proud passion,
Like a tall tree imprison'd amid briars,
Cannot throw out its branches freely, and so

Is tortur'd to misshapes ; and when it struggles
To lift its head above the jungle, is claspt
Under by poisonous o'ergrowths ; is distorted
To envies, which beget asperities,
And scorn. Oh ! often, when thou couldst not use
Thine hand to strike, I've seen thee sting with fear ;
And with thy tongue wound worse than with thine arm.
And when thou couldst not win thy way with truth,
Creep round by secret ways ; and when compell'd
To yield to right, resent it as a wrong ;
And till the sunset of that day brood o'er it
In solitude. Should such things be ? and thou
Able to do great deeds ? For I have seen thee
Give aid unto the weak against the strong ;
Proffer wise counsel, breathe consoling words,
And living on the love which thou hadst won.
Then have I said, ' Ah ! that it might be so—
For ever, only so—and he content
To feed on praise of true, nor thirst to grasp
The glitter of false honour, would but feel
That all, that is not freely given, sometime
Must be withdrawn ' ; for if thou wert a God
Dwelling with men, thou couldst not in their eyes
Possess thine own unenvied. Oh beware !
For he that aims at all things, like a child,
Who strives to catch fair flowers beyond his reach,
Falls wounded back, and misses even that
Which lies within his grasp ; and thou wilt find thee,
When years are over, poorer than the man,

Whose aim, however lowly, still is single,
For less than all—tho' far more than enough—
Being short of thy desire, will leave thee lean ;
While he is mighty being satisfied.
Wouldst thou be Poet, Warrior, Statesman, Sage ?
Soon as thy young ambition puts on armour,
Straightway the tender voices of the Muse,
Within the secret places of thy soul,
Will bid thee follow her to lonely vales,
Turfwalks, and caverns echoing with seamusic ;
Up to the hills crested with golden clouds.
Will bid thee wander thro' the isles, and hear
The tongues of many peoples ; and to tread
Strange cities, to behold great festivals ;
Pluck beauty from sweet wildernesses ; hear
The songs of many minstrels, and give answer
With thine own harp and voice ; to weave thee
 garlands,
Garlands of such imperishable hue,
No time shall fade them. All this mayst thou win
By love alone, in light of peaceful hours,
Thine hands unstain'd with blood, thine heart unvex'd
By storms of strife ; and when old age shall come,
The past would look to thee as young as now,
Seen thro' the veil of natural tears, which soon,
Or late, must dim the bright divinity
Of this life's dawn ; or Death, which is our friend,
Calling us on to Immortality
Would seem to be our foe. Be wise, be wise.

Is it not better to climb one green hill ;
To build thee there a cottage in a garden ;
To wreath with rose, to fence it with sweet briars ;
To walk in thine own vineyard, and to pluck
The fruits of every season, and at last
The vintage, crown of all thy happy toil ;
To see the sun rise, and the sun go down,
Upon thy day of life, in holy calm,
Holier for all the storms that pass between
The morn and even ; than with beating heart
All the day long to struggle on and on
Up to the thunderpeaks, and icy crown
Of desolation ; only to rejoice
In silence, and to shout where none can hear :
Till darkness fall on thee when thou art faint,
And none to help thee ? O boy, death is better
And deaf ears fill'd with dust, than listening ever
To lamentations of thy lonely heart,
Regrets, and yearnings, where no echo is
Of human sympathy ; no well-earn'd hymn
Of that true praise, whose chords of harmony
Are others' love. Forgive me, if I speak
Words that may seem to chide thee—'tis not so—
Couldst thou but hear that still small voice within,
That pleadeth with unutterable pity
For thee, who sometime wert my charge ; who art,
Of all the dear sons of my soul, the most
To love and fear : forget not thou my words ;
When he, who gave thee counsel in thy youth,

Is vanish'd, like a shadow, from the earth ;
 The voice that warn'd thee thinner than the winds."

VI

Ev'n as he spoke, all passions, like the lights,
 And glooms that follow o'er the morning plains,
 Flitted across my heart ; pride, anger, scorn,
 Remorse, and tenderness, and grim resolve.
 But when he ended, at his feet I fell ;
 I bow'd before him ; I had no voice, but tears
 That fell upon his hand. Oh that his words
 Had been more deeply rooted in my heart !
 Oh that, like fruitful rains, those tears had grown them
 About my heartstrings ! but alas ! they sank not
 Far thro' the stony corselet of ambition ;
 But there were wither'd, like the seed unsown.
 I felt, while listening to the wise old man,
 Like one who sentinels a barren rock,
 Which a clear cold river runs around,
 Making a pleasant sound ; but none the more
 Can he come down from that lone crag, and take
 A drop to cool his tongue ; but hears it glide
 With a forlorn regret. Pride seem'd a conscience ;
 The fancied duties of my station strong
 Necessities, and vast, thro' fumes of pride.
 Methought that heartful man, though old in years,
 Less manly-wise than children ; sure his heart
 Ne'er dreamt of ills ; his ears had never heard

Wrongs which I look'd on daily ; and to redress them—
Ambitious less of virtue than of praise—
I held a virtue. Then I said, “ O father ;
I fear it will but seem ingratitude,
For friendly counsels, to unmask to thee
The world's experiences ; and cast their shadows
Upon thy clear and honourable soul ;
To cloud the even of thy peaceful days
With evil memories of evil deeds.
Thy spirit, like a quiet mountain peak
Smit by the setting sun, less warm than bright,
Looks down upon the waters tossing under
And takes far distance for tranquillity.
'Tis well for thee to see the vessel toil
Through troubled waves ; he, standing at the helm,
And watchful of its motions, only knows
How mighty are the waters and the winds.
The groaning timbers, and the roaring storm,
The momentary perils, constant trials,
Far off may seem no more to thy dim eyes,
Whose youth was peaceful, than the tiny motions
Of a child's boat built of a stick and shell.
But there are some who work and watch therein,
Who guard the onward vessel of the state,
And look for rocks and breakers night and day,
Tho' days and nights of calm may make our tasks
Seem easy ; sometimes must the vessel's course
Change suddenly, else founder, struck by squalls ;
Or split upon sharp crags. Now Myrsilus,

Whom thou didst guide, and counsel for his good—
As thou hast ever done—is one of them ;
A rock, not hid, but open, and defiant ;
And loud with insult as the bark of Scylla.
There are some spirits like watchers in a tower ;
Who first survey the region, and its bound,
Ere they come down to traverse it ; forewarned,
Tho' timid, weak, and faint, they still are armed.
While others, with a giant's strength, are weak
As blinded Cyclops ; measureless conceit
They take for inspiration ; and rush on
In darkness, till they stumble ; such is he.
His strength is folly, and his arms vainglory.
He with his troop strides on thro' bloody wrongs ;
And takes the wandering eyes of pale despair,
The mute fear of the oppressed and the poor,
For tributes to his triumph ; he forgets
That a hush goes before a hurricane ;
And that the surge, thrown hindward by the wind,
Regathers, and, driven on by stronger winds
Of public hate, rolls back upon the shore ;
Effaces the old hollows, and flings up
The surf beyond the highest watermark.
And be not angry with me, O my father,
If I desire to be this very wind,
Ay, ev'n the hurricane to blow against him,
The boaster ; and to carry on my wings
The curses of the poor. Judge for thyself,
If he, who hath learnt justice from thy lips,

Should not lift up a youthful noble's hand
To thrust aside for ever, and at once
This overgrown, and heavy-footed idler,
Who, trampling on the worm, hath roused the serpent.

VII

Listen then, father : 'twas but yester-even,
Returning from Methymna by the shore,
We reach'd a hamlet of poor fishermen,
Hard by a countryhouse of Myrsilus,
And there we met a bridal band with flowers
And torches. They were bearing the young bride
Up to her future home among the hills,
The only daughter of a fisherman ;
For she was wed unto an upland youth.
They met at Mitylene oft and early
On marketdays, as he sat by his panniers
Of figs and grapes ; she by her fishy crates
Ere sunrise ; and their young eyes told their hearts
Unto each other. And then simple chat,
Held in cool shadows of the quiet dawn,
Left memories that to each other were
An added life ; they laugh'd, they sang, they dream'd ;
The rough-spun network of their innocent hopes
Was link'd for them as strongly as the toils
Of Vulcan, and with magic blisses laden.
Still neither fisher's bark, nor viny slope,
Was golden as their dreams ; which if not all

As vain, are yet unequal to provide them
Their hearts' desire. So many a changeful day,
Though hopeful, rolled by, till the old man died,
Peacefully at his farm among the hills.
And now the warmth of that more eager flame,
Gentler and swifter than the touch of Time,
Dried up the tears of Nature ; the new love
Embalm'd the old ; he richer by a field,
And orchard, like a temple for the Nymphs,
Pillar'd with cherry, fig, and plum, and pear,
Round which the lithe vine gambol'd like a flame ;
Or led thro' long green aisles which screen'd the sun ;
And left the moss, and sweet herb underneath
Dewy at noon ; and then a patch of grain,
That rippled in the spring-wind like a tide
Of gold, up to a ridge of olives gray,
Old, gnarl'd, and crook'd ; as though they strove to mock
The vineyard with its laughters underneath.
Now, therefore, corn and wine, and oil were his,
And now he would fetch up, to his own home,
To cheer his widow'd mother, that fair girl,
That maid o' the sea, whose rosy feet were kiss'd
Each morn by the blue waves ; whose azure eyes,
Yet dark, had drawn into their inmost depth
The purple of the waters ; and whose heart,
Simple, and trustful, loving, strong, and pure,
Was more a treasure to him than the pearls
Of all the Nereids. The country folk
Turn'd up a sideward valley ; and the hour

The soft breaths of the twilight, the still flame
Yet throbbing in the west, the happy songs,
The twinkle of the lamps and torches sinking
Into the violet distance, stay'd us there
Awhile, and set us musing ; and we wove
Instinctively epithalamial measures ;
And with fantastic beauty strove to gild
The simple sweetness of the festal show
Sacred to peace. Once more the rustic pomp
Rose visible to us, tho' more remote,
In winding slower up a thymy slope.
When all at once, in wonder and alarm,
We heard the singing change to angry cries.
With violence we saw the torchbearers
Seized ; and their lights dash'd earthward ; and their robes
Rent by strange hands ; and from a cypress-wood,
Shadowing the upland way, rush'd forth a band
Of masked revellers ; and methought I saw
Iæus with his frantic acolytes
Borne on with shouts and laughter, that overwhelm'd
The uproar of the beaten villagers.
I cried—' Oh sure I know that central shape,
Still foremost in all outrage, as of old,
And clothed with might of limb beyond the rest
To deal it : let us haste, while yet we may,
Lest ill be done, that cannot be undone.
But, when we reach'd the spot, the deed was done.
The rioters had vanish'd ; and their steeds
Held harness'd for them in the thicket near,

Had borne them off along the winding ways
Between the vineyards ; and we heard their shouts
Dying afar among the hills, and nearer
The curses of the bridesmen, and the shrieks
Of women in despair. Such was this deed.
Grief drove the poor men wild ; none knew the name
Of their oppressor ; but a month before
A villager had seen him step ashore
Out of a pleasure-barge, while Ida's brothers
And father there were hauling in their nets,
And she sat knitting in the prow o' the boat,
Her dark hair drooping o'er her shoulders fair,
Her large blue eyes raised with a mute surprise.
And with the faith of her inviolate heart
Truthful and innocent, she gave to him
That faith, which to a brave man is a shield
Invisible betwixt himself and her,
Yet strong as adamant. But to his heart
It show'd like lawless freedom, and a kind
Of welcome, and a challenge to his prowess.
And when her eyes were cast down suddenly,
And swift confusion mantled on her cheek,
'Twas to him as submission, and a triumph ;
And he look'd on devouring with his own.
And, as the tyrant and his company
Wound round the hill in their descent again,
They came close under us ; their voices rose
Clearly : I heard him say, ' They know us not ;
But I know them ; and who, think ye, they be ?

Alcæus and his brothers whom I hate ;
On whom I swear that I will be avenged
With this same act repeated on themselves.
And, for the wild-eyed fisher's girl, fullsoon
They shall repay me with a fairer flower ;
And the three I will charge with mine own deed !'
Scarce had we space to swallow these few words,
Gasp'd out with panting breath—when 'Follow me !'
I cried—but knew not whither ; for our foes
Were horsemen ; and 'twas vain to seek for them
Already in the city's unknown shades
Concealed. And while we spake, a dark-eyed boy
Broke thro' the midst of us ; he had beheld
Out of his upland home the bridal band
Ascending ; he had mark'd the sudden tumult ;
And with alarmed speed and fixed eye
Rush'd down the stony way ; and to his cry
'Where is she ? where ?' no answer came ; he shriek'd,
'Quick follow me ;' and diving suddenly
Into a neighbour's orchard —as he knew
All byways and all crosspaths in the hills—
He brought us, swift as their well-baited steeds
Where two roads met ; and there and then we stay'd
Our course, just in the nick of time to see
Sweep by the armed robbers. When the bride
Beheld her lover she stretch'd forth her arms.
And he, his dark locks like a lion waving,
With desperate might snatch'd from the spoiler's arms
The treasure of his life ; she sank unharm'd

By the wayside, but he before the strength
Of the onward rushing steed ; the horse, though scared,
Harm'd not in aught the boy ; the ravisher
Fled shamefully before the brandish'd staves
And uproar of the bridesmen ; but a club,
Drawn by a menial's hand, in passing, smote
Against the temples of the fallen youth ;
And laid him helpless with his bleeding locks
Scatter'd along the dust ; his eyes in death
Turn'd fondly on her—but he spake no more.
And then indeed all lesser passions hush'd
In the wild grief of that forsaken girl,
Who rose up in the strength of her despair,
And flung herself upon the breast of him
She loved ; and press'd his lips yet warm, and laugh'd
A frenzied laugh, not knowing what she did ;
For madness had possess'd her ; and she sat
Playing with his smear'd locks, and her red lips
Still redder with his blood. We raised him up ;
We bore him through an open garden gate,
Along a trellised walk, which led us to
A table, spread beneath a portico,
Telling of recent revels ; now the place
Was still, the seats forsaken ; and the cups,
And the half-empty flagons signified
That here the tyrant and his guests had been ;
And had gone forth, on fire with wine, to do
A deed of wrong ; and risen from their carouse
Struck with unnatural thirst to sacrifice

The pure blood of the simple and the poor
To the Eumenides! We stood around,
In silence, and we fill'd a bowl of wine,
And, our hands stain'd with that most innocent blood,
We pledged each other, vowing to avenge it ;
While the last crimson band of the sunk sun
Answer'd us from afar, as 'twere a torch
Of Nemesis ; and from the mountains came
A low wind sighing thro' the garden trees
A sympathetic threne. And now, O father,
Such is a portion of the many wrongs,
Inflicted by the mighty and the proud
Upon the weak and poor. If I be born
Of that same class, that holds the sacred right
Of standing foremost in all deeds of honour,
Shall I behold such things go unaveng'd ?
Not rather peril me and mine for right ;
Lest the great Gods should mock us in our pride,
Our self-love, and our frail prosperity ;
And join us to the downfall of the godless,
The lawless, and the worst ; us mortal men,
Who dare to live the life of the Immortals
Secure from harms." And then the old man said—
" If such be deeds done in these evil days,
Then needs must I be glad that I am old ;
And that mine aged feeble steps outrun
The old age of the world ; that I no more
Have strength to shed the blood of good or ill.
Although I blame thee not for heats of anger,

Where calm philosophy had been dishonour ;
Yet none the less may my untroubled eld,
That hath escaped this fire of youth unharm'd,
And looks not back on ills it cannot heal,
Counsel thee—what at last may win thee too—
What I have earn'd—a spirit unreproved ;
Counsel thee patience which is fortitude,
Stronger than daring hand, and eagle eye,
Can arm thee with. Oh may thy latter days
Turn to their prime, as moonlight to the sun,
Drawing from them a pale yet peaceful light.
Though I be last of all my kin—have seen
My friends of youth, all my beloved ones
Pass to the shades before me—though I be
Childless, forgotten ; though I leave no eye
To weep for me, yet this I do remember.
No human face has closed its eyes on mine,
That in my conscience, to torment me, set
Fiery words of judgment, awful tongues,
And blood-bedabbled spectres. Those I prized
Are parted ; yet they peep from out the past,
With tender smiles of an immortal love,
That time shall wound no more ; they come to me
Like the sweet Hamadryads, and mild Fauns,
Haunting my sleep with sunny looks, kind words,
And consolations. Hark ! I charge thee, boy,
To listen to a few last words of mine.
For thou wilt never listen to me more ;
A day or two, and I shall be at rest.

And when thou wakest up, or liest down,
Fail not to fetch them from thy memory forth ;
And greet each day, and close it with the same.
*Speak truth with the true heart—Oh ! that is best—
But alway truth ; tho' the rebellious will,
Like a wild horse, rear up against the curb.
Speak of the absent as tho' they were by,
And heard thy faintest whisper ; lest perchance
Ill tongues should wing ill words, as winds that blow
Sparks into angry flames ; or thou be found,
When challenged, for the sake of a good name,
Or gain, or peace, to vary from thyself,
And honour. Let thy secret, unseen acts
Be such as if the men thou prizest most
Were witnesses around thee ; the great Gods
Look'd down upon thee, and immortal ears
Hearken'd thine inmost thought ! So may thine age
Be even as mine. Lift not thine hand to strike,
Save in the cause of justice, and when words
Are vain as wind, avenge not a slight wrong,
Or any, with that violence which, weigh'd
Against the evil deed thou wouldst avenge,
Makes equipoise of ill, disarms the hand
Of Nemesis, and mocks the blessed Gods
We pray to for their aid, and then disown ;
And scatters o'er the earth the fruitful seed
Of ceaseless discords, like the thistleheads
Borne o'er the wilderness. Make not of mirth
An endless feast, lest the wide world of weeds*

*And flowers, that grow together, afterwards
Seem as that wilderness ; and keep thou wine
For winter hearths, and through the summer days
Rejoice with songs alone—farewell, farewell.”*

I kiss'd that aged hand, and parted from him
Swiftly : my heart was full ; and when his words
Ceased, as the winds before the rain, I wept.
Once looking back, I saw him seated there
For the last time beneath the rustling vine ;
The sea broke at his feet ; the swallows whirl'd
O'er his white head ; then he arose, and pass'd
Slowly upon his staff into the shade
Of his own dwelling. As the shadow drown'd
His form, methought a darker shadow closed
Round him—alas ! I never saw him more.
He was borne out, nor seen nor heard again
By them who loved him, and who ow'd to him
Much flower and fruitage of their after lives.
Some humble souls wept for him ; and I saw
The torches pass, I heard the trumpet wail
As he was borne to silence ; as I stood
Amid a crowd of the gay heartless youth,
Whose flatteries were singing in mine ears ;
Whose idle taunts were flung like sparks of fire
From whirling brands on good and ill alike ;
Whose reckless folly and light laugh I fear'd
More than the dead man's frown ; whose mockery
scorch'd
My tears up faster than all tender thoughts

Could draw them from me. For ev'n then I mused
 Of him, whose loving wisdom might have changed me
 For good, if gratitude and piety
 Had made their voices heard above the din
 Of daily vanity, and the trumpet notes
 Of haughty aspirations—but in vain.

* * * *

VIII

Hymen ! O Hymenæe ! was the cry
 That woke me up upon the sovran morn,
 Ere sunrise ; and their songs came to mine ear,
 Ere sleep had been thrown off, and bred such dreams,
 As make the reawaken'd sense and soul
 Weep for the lost unreal ; tho' that morn
 Was heavenly-bright with glad realities,
 Sweet spousals of twin loves ; that had not grown
 Some April morning, like the first sweet flowers,
 Sweeter than all the wealth of Summer, yet
 To fade and die away ere Summer came ;
 But were the incense of two faithful hearts,
 That knew each other's heart, and not the eyes
 Only ; and saw for ever in those eyes
 The heart's own beauty. Should I not awake ?
 Hymen ! O Hymenæe ! rose again
 The bridal song ; and flutes and tabors join'd
 Their pleasant voices, and the happy birds
 Fired all the Maymorn azure with the sparks
 Of kindred jubilee ; and cymbals rang,

Lifted by the lithe arms of jocund girls
High o'er their rose-bound temples, as they press'd
Lightly the dewy green with dancer's step,
And pass'd before us. As the pomp advanced
Along the green slope of a bowery hill,
Methought I look'd upon the Golden Age
Come back to life ; some pure Ideal wrought
Out of the sunny brain of Phœbus laid,
In noonday drowse, under a covert roof'd
With early rose. Along the path we trod,
The sunlights, dashing thro' the leaves, blown back
By the warm gusts of morning, flooded all
The moss-walks for a moment, and lit up
The fallen blooms, snow-white, and gold, and blue,
And crimson ; and play'd o'er the curly locks
Of the young timbrel-bearers—many a braid
Of choicest flowerets dropt with diamond dew.
Once more the envious shadows veil'd the day,
And swallow'd up in their cool, soft embrace
The waving heads, white arms, and rosy wreaths
Of the young damsels, and the youths that bore
Fresh panniers, laden with some precious gifts
For Artemis, to lay before her shrine,
And charm the virgin Goddess till she smiled.
I hung back to behold, with all my soul
Set in mine eyes, the glory of that morn,
That I might paint it on my inner sense
So wondrous clear, no cares, no aftertimes
Of mortal trouble, nor old age itself

Should hide it from me ! and I stood apart,
Until their forms thro' distance seem'd to swim
In mists of light. And when again there rose
“ Hymen ! O Hymenæe ! ” it was far
And faint ; then I ran forward and o'ertook,
Just as the foremost of the bridal march
Rose in the sunshine o'er the circling woods.
And lo ! the temple with its columns huge,
And architrave, throng'd with the solemn Gods,
Drown'd in the golden smoke of sunrise, shone
Like a tall gate of Heaven !

IX

The next day,

At even, from her father's house they bore
The gentle bride ; and all the company
Of friends, and kinsfolk, all who yestermorn
Had fill'd the temples of the Gods with prayers,
And hymns and odours—and beyond the rest
Artemis, Virgin ever, lest she frown
Upon espousals even such as this—
Were met together ; and my mother came
And kiss'd the damsel in the portico.
The bridegroom stood aside, that he might hear
The tender words exchanged, and mark the smiles
Of greeting unobserved. And now they brought,
From far and near, such tributes to the bride,
As, whether plain or costly, still were fair

And precious all ; for none seem'd more or less
Than other ; whether gold and silver threads,
Or homely woollen thro' the tissues ran ;
On all, seen clearly by the eye of Love,
Heart-love was broider'd like a rich red-rose ;
And old and young strove to outdo each other
In lavish bounty. There were vestures, wrought
Of such rare needlework, they seem'd to weigh
No heavier than a breath of morning dew :
And yet their price in gold might to the poor
Seem vanity, such as the Gods might visit
With retribution ; there were sandals, sew'd
By delicate fingers, only to be worn
On such high festivals as come not oft
In any year ; and many-colour'd veils ;
Vials of eastern odours ; carven cups ;
Flagons of silver, boss'd with buds and flowers ;
Urns moulded out of finest filter'd earth,
And baked to lucent marble in the flame
Of sevenfold-heated furnaces ; whereon
Trinmphs, and pomps were shown, and deeds of arms ;
Or wrestlers knit together ; or the wheels
Of rival chariots flinging up the dust.
The vestibule was throng'd with laughing eyes
And mirthful voices ; while the bronzed arms
Of slaveboys, well contented with their task,
Bore up the panniers laden with the gifts.
And then came Citharus, bearing in his hand
The offering of our house, a diadem

Of mingled gems, all colours, made to mock
The beauty of fresh flowers ; an heirloom rich,
From mother unto mother handed down,
Thro' many generations, and at last
Thus best bestow'd upon the sweet young bride ;
At least, in their first rapture so they said.
And yet I thought the tender pensive face
That smiled beneath it once, when thou wert young,
My Mother, would have bow'd in answer to
The selfsame loving words in days of old.,

ANTIMENIDAS

1

 Holding in thy hand
 An ivory-hilted brand
 Inlaid with gold,
 Fair to behold,
Thou camest back from a far-distant land.

2

It swell'd him with pride and it made him mad.

3

I've heard that one in Sparta bred,
 So the rumour ran,
The wise Aristodemus said
" 'Tis Money makes the Man."

ALCÆUS.

I

AMID the merrymaking came the cry
Of instant war ; as when the mountain wind
Shrills thro' the purple vineyards, and bears down
At summernoon the frore breath of the snows.
We spread the banquet in the Armoury,
That Love should not forget the morrowmorn ;
That he was sitting under cloud of Death,

And that his flutes and tabors must give place
To brazen tongues of wrath ; that War should part
Not without the sweet memories of Love ;
For partings must be with the coming dawn.
Meanwhile, let there be joy with dance and song ;
That, when the clash of arms is in our ears,
Still they may echo with the festal sounds
Of this sweet eve, and make the warrior's heart
Impregnable to fears, with thought of those
He leaves behind him ; and his armed hand
Insuperable, in the hope to save
The land he loves and yearns to tread again.
So, soon all friends were gather'd at the board ;
And the bright day gave place to softer light
Let down by silver chains from lamps that burn'd
Sweet odours ; lamps that shone, as summer moons,
Over the carven cups, and urns of flowers.
The evening wind blew from the plots without
Their dewy breathings ; and the sound was heard
Of fountains in the gardens ; and the rain,
Seen 'twixt the parting curtain's wind-blown folds,
Glitter'd in the moonlight like sparks of fire ;
And from rosethickets, under arching sprays,
Came, ever and anon, the distant swell
Of choral voices, whose soft tide of song
Swam, mingling with the moonbeams. And we paused
Amid our converse ; as though in our ears,
And hearts, Elysium seem'd to fall in drops
Of Music, sweet tears of Melpomene ;

Melpomene best Muse of all the Nine !
Foremost sat Citharus with his dove-eyed bride ;
And all the children of our house were there
But Antimenidas ; ah ! where was he ?
And first in honour, and not least in grace,
The dear house-mother with her children sat ;
Then kindred faces, from far mountain homes
Seldom turn'd city-wards ; and many a friend,
Loved for his truth, or honour'd for his skill ;
Menon, the sun of wit, and soul of mirth ;
And Melanippus, trusty friend ; and she,
The pale-brow'd Sappho, through whose dark, deep eyes
Rose, starlike, inner glories. And I saw
There Anaktoria wreath'd with rose, herself
The queen of beauty ; and she tamed her lips
To tenderness ; her eyes, two sunlit heavens,
To dewy twilights ; everyone was glad.
And ev'n the sad Erinna left her loom,
And solitary home, to warm her heart
For years to come ; and feed upon those joys
In memory which she never hoped to feel.
And now the youths and damsels, cupbearers,
The fairest children of our noblest chiefs,
Each a young Hermes, or a Hebe, clad
In many-colour'd vests, began to run
Between the tables, filling to the brim
The beakers wreathed with fresh-gather'd flowers,
That painted in the purple Lesbian wine
Their hues, as 'twere dark fountains shaded o'er

By hanging gardens. Some cast odours in,
That fill'd the place with blisses ; some sweetmeats,
As was the custom of the early times ;
Some on their knees did hold up silver ewers,
Wherein they dipp'd their hands : the elders fill'd
The highest seats ; and then the foremost men
In noble deeds ; along the centre stood
White images of the great Gods. Then rose
Citharus, now the Master of the feast ;
And bade us pour out the first and best wine
To the Immortals, on the festal board,
Altar of Friendship, and convivial Joy,
And hospitable Peace : “ For are not those
Gather'd around me, a mirror of the World,
A picture of Humanity on earth
Call'd by the good Gods to the feast of Life,
Its fruits and flowers ? Pour out the best of all
To them who give it ; that our hopes may be
Crown'd by their graces, and our joys be full.
And first to Vesta, guardian of the hearth,
And home, who holds the rooftree o'er our heads ;
Without whose mercies all our household cares
Were frail, as dwellings builded on the slope
Of fiery mountains, or earthquaking plains.”
Then from tall vases, running o'er with flowers,
He handed to the guests fresh garlands, strung
With silver braid, till every man had bound
His brows, and scatter'd roundabout him all
The remnant roses ; till but half the floor

Was visible between the fallen rain
Of garden sweets, of leaves, and buds, and flowers.
Oh! who shall tell how soft the moments were,
How swiftly sped, though on their plumes they bore
More lovely, glancing colours than the wings
Of turtles in the sunbeam; were more sweet
Than dew-dropt musk-rose petals shed at dawn?
The laugh of Menon, heard among the rest,
Set mirth a moving, like a flute-note high
Above the timbrels, or a dancer's foot.
Fair Anaktoria bent her queenlike brow,
—Well pleased to read heart-homage in men's eyes—
In answer to sweet words, though her own heart
Unvanquish'd laugh'd at their captivity.
She spoke of her own land, Ionia,
Its wealth and wonders; and "Alas!" she sigh'd,
"Shall a strange sceptre shadow us at last,
A conqueror's heel press on us? let me hope
That here are some, who will turn back the proud
The way they came, ere my Miletus hear
The owl of Athens hooting from her towers."
Atthis was gleeful as a dimpling spring
Shaded with maiden-hair, and briery rose;
But Sappho lean'd back, dreamful even then;
And from the beauty of the Actual
Weaving a lovelier beauty, to the tune
To some unheard sweet song; and oft her smile,
Like a warm moonbeam cross'd by twinkling leaves,
Seem'd all astir with inner fancy-work.

Then follow'd many a pleasant tale, or sad,
Of prowess, peril, wonders, accidents ;
Ventures by flood and field, heroic acts ;
Triumphs of patience, nights in mountain snows ;
Spoils won ; the chase, the race ; midsummer days
Among the islands ; wanderings into wilds
Unknown before ; memories that kindled hopes ;
Young hopes that look'd on to far years, and drew
Smiles from old eyes that look'd back to the same ;
Of victors crown'd, of wrestlers overthrown ;
The chariot-course when last the rivals met,
And to the inland solitudes went up
The shoutings from the amphitheatre.

II

But suddenly both eyes and ears were closed
To all around me, and I saw but one.
Whose is that face, so dark with eastern suns,
That eye so bright, those limbs so knit with toil
To sinewy strength, that form heroical,
But thine, my brother ? He had but enter'd now ;
And stood awhile apart, with both his palms
Resting upon an ivory-hilted sword
Of eastern fashion, rarely wrought ; " 'Tis he !
'Tis Antimenidas !" ah ! then I rose ;
I ran, I fell upon his neck ; but he
Smiled as he press'd me to him : " It is well
That warlike rumours reach'd me ; else had I

O brother, never reach'd our home to see
This feast of friends ; I see that good things gush,
Like fountains in the desert unforeseen,
From evils ; had I lost another day
We should have met only in battle-field
Without the memory of this bliss to cheer
My spirit onward." Again I cried, "O thou
Deem'd lost, as to our senses thou hast been,
This many a winter, since we parted last,
For no sign reach'd us ; when thou wert not seen—
As they who listen in a vacant night,
And hearkening ever to the dreary void
May hear weird noises in the silence—I,
Methought, heard Death articulate thy name.
So doubly is this moment blest to me,
That from the ashes of dead Hope awakes
No fancied form to baffle me, no shape
Cloudlike of memory ; but thyself, the same
Thy very self : " just then a lamp pass'd by,
And cast a light upon his weary face ;
And then I saw, clearer than in my own,
How moments, like to little waterdrops,
Had worn them channels, like dry torrent beds,
Laid for those tears that only dew the cheeks
Where they are not ; and how his brow had felt
The breath of the scorch'd deserts, and the fire
Of other climes ! He sat down by my side.
I bade the cup-boy bear him of that wine
That had slept, dreaming underneath the earth

Of this great day, since last he parted hence,
 When I was but a boy, and look'd on him,
 As only boyhood can on one advanced
 One lustre onward ; as he drain'd the cup
 He cried—" Ah ! Lesbos, Lesbos ; never since
 Hath any vintage purpled on my lip
 Like this our island nectar ;" and I said—
 " While they are talking of their divers feats,
 Tell me, my brother, of thine own ; and when
 Came to thee the great sword I see thee bear ;
 An ivory-hilted sword of massy weight,
 Wreathed with fantastic scroll-work, and inlaid
 With gold device : " " I bring thee this " he said.
 " My voice hath never had a charm, like thine,
 For tears, for triumphs, for delight—a voice
 To make the young heart echo, and the old
 Live o'er again—a voice, to which the world
 Trembles in answer, like a harp struck well.
 One only note it hath, and that hath been
 A clarion-sound in peril. But take this ;
 And hang it up amid the curious arms
 Of many generations ; if they say,
 ' Which of thy forefathers of mighty build
 Carried this weapon ? ' thou shalt say ' My brother
 Won it from him who bore it, one who stood
 A giant of six cubits ' ; and my praise,
 Pour'd from thy lips, will be to me and thee
 A double harvest from the selfsame field.
 Thou know'st full well my heart was not as thine

From the beginning ; tho' we grew together,
As two tall trees that bend to one another,
Thine was the seemlier, mine the sturdier frame ;
Thy hair was dark, but mine was sunny-fair.
And while thy soul shone chiefly in thine eyes,
When some great thought, as lightning in the night,
Struck thro' their blackness ; mine, as the blue sea
Lifting the sunbeams on its surface, throbb'd
With momentary passions, eager hopes,
Brief joys, and high thoughts of heroic acts,
And strength, and names of honour won with arms.
Yet how we loved each other, how we loved !
Star drawn to star by powers that cross'd each other ;
Loud trumpet-notes round which soft harpings shower'd ;
So that sweet Sappho named us Night and Day.
And twain were thus as one—unlike grew like—
Our spirits borrow'd aspects of each other—
For thou my hardihood with dews of pity
Didst temper ; and I lent thee linked mail
For action. Hand in hand we trod the earth ;
I loved to hear thee sing of deeds of mine ;
Thou lovedst to see me body forth thy songs.
And when thy heart, as sometimes needs must be,
With shadows scared, or dazzled with its light,
Saw not the shapes of things, my clear gray eyes
Peer'd thro' the mists of dark and bright ; and thou,
When with mine iron will I would rebel
'Gainst Time, and Space, and Possibility,
Wouldst with keen arrows of thy fancy sound

The abysses ; till my soul unused to fear,
Grew still as at the wholesome touch of frost.
And yet not all unlike ; for both were born
Fashion'd with eyes that open'd on the sun,
And those strong wings that seek it ; hearts that held
Unhonour'd life a living death ; and death,
Honour achieved, immortal life ! alas !
But we were dreamers both ; both fired too soon
To lift the anchor reckless of the helm ;
Scornful of rest and peaceful thoughts, to sail
Far forth from shelter'd inlets undisturb'd,
And dash athwart the great seas manifold.
Ah me ! ah me ! how many days seem fled
Since those thoughts were ; for, tho' my years are few,
My thoughts are many ; and here we meet again
A little space, too soon to part once more.
Ah me ! how dreadful is the spectre fair
That once was joy in life ; how mournful-sweet
The memory of those moments—days—ev'n years—
When all before us, whether Earth or Heaven,
Desert or vineyard, icy peak, or plain,
Swathed in the selfsame Summer azure, fled
Before us as we trod the dews at morn.
Soon shall we stand upon the top of all ;
Touch with faint hands the barrenness that seem'd
Elysium ; hear the silence round us, whence
Far songs seem'd waving to us ; or only hear
The cinders crash beneath our heels ; the dust
Of vanities—cold ashes, loves or fears—

The spirits of the Dead go by as wind,
Or Death, like the lone thunder, calls to us.
Now we are met, and have between us set
This jar of golden Lesbian, I will tell thee
All that befell me since that saddest hour
Of all my life ; it was a rainy eve,
I well remember, when as now we sat,
Our young morn shadow'd with untimely cloud,
As now the noonday of our vexed years
Is lit a moment with returning mirth.
Tell me which is the better—hard to say—
Yet such is Life—Songs end in sighs—and sighs
Kindle with songs again. The host's swart face
Peep'd thro' the fluttering trellis, anger'd half,
And half well-pleas'd, that we had order'd wine
We could not taste ; the breeze swept by, and broke
Our sad low murmur'd speech with wailing sound.
We heard the melody of one sweet song—
Known from our cradles unto me and thee—
Wave from behind ; and ebb with the hoarse sea
That sobb'd beneath us. I rose, and took thy hand ;
And with my feet upon the plashy stair
That met the sea, I stretch'd the other down
To the boatmen ; and when first I raised my eyes
Out of my folded arms, I saw thee there,
Thine hand upon the marble balustrade,
Thy brows bent forward with an eager look,
Till misty twilight shut out all but that
One mournful image shadow'd in my soul.'

“The heart is faithful whose fond records are
Slight things like these”—I answer’d, “O my brother ;
And yet thy spirit, better knit than mine,
Needed but merry voices, or a song ;
Or welcome of bold comrades wing’d with hope ;
Thine eyes to look upon the busy crowd,
And common purpose, making many one,
And the weak strong ; straight to put off, like sleep,
The present weight of sorrow, and forget
Like dreams in sudden daylight. But I stood
In love with grief ; and shrank from sight of men
For weary hours ; as tho’ familiar life
Like loving touches to a wounded side
Made sorrow ache the more : Oh ! how I loved
To torture mine own soul, with memories wrought
To such a fairy skein of tenderness
By cunning fancies, that thy smallest acts,
Unnoted words, and unremember’d looks,
As ghostly witnesses against me came
And charged me with ingratitude. One morn
That we had plann’d to reach a mountain peak
Before the Sun, I woke thee with a shout ;
But thou wert sick and all our purpose lost ;
And I went forth half anger’d, and alone.
Again, when I was lying with fix’d eyes,
And fever’d tongue, I saw my mother pass
Into the chamber with thee, and thy hand
Did clasp hers piteously, thy wondering eyes
Look’d weeping up into her anxious face ;

I heard thee whisper 'Can he die so soon?'
I saw thee running on the morning sands,
A warrior leading on the fisher boys,
Thy trumpet but a wreathen rosy shell ;
A swimmer buffeting the ridgy sea ;
A horseman flying towards the mountains dark,
Thy fair head smitten by a spark of light
Over the dark cloud of his rolling mane,
Bent like the morning star above the sea.
O Brother, none but those whose daily life
Is fed by Love's sun, and perennial dew,
By hourly converse, like the Summer air
That stirs the flowers and draws forth all their sweetness,
Can feel how like Night in a wilderness
With barrenness, and silence, and the dark,
It is to lose the interchanging moods
Of that home-life ; tho' crost with stormy hours,
That make relapsing peace like Summer blue
Come back with tenfold blisses—let me hear thee—"

III

Then answer'd Antimenidas, and said—
"Thou wilt remember, when I parted hence,
'Twas for the wars nigh Babylon ; the kings
Of Egypt and Assyria would meet,
And I would serve with Pharaoh in the East.
Thrice did the boatman shout in my deaf ears,
Ere I had turn'd from gazing on the shores,
Whence I was parting, dim as early dreams ;

And in the shadow of the warship's hull
He rested on his oars ; a few brief words—
A trumpet from the deck—and helmed heads
That gleam'd amid the twilight—and I saw
The swarthy captain of the Egyptian King ;
Who to my queries moved his hand along
The cloudy orient, black with coming night ;
And the long line of that heroic land,
The memorable plain, where Xanthus runs
And Ilion frown'd ; whose giant ghosts I saw
Rise up that moment 'twixt the earth and heaven,
And heard the iron ring upon their shields
In dream more moving than the armed hosts
Of living men. 'Young man, if there were light,'
He said, 'ev'n now perchance I might show to thee
How the old fights, sung by your ancient bard,
Were lost and won.' I answer'd not his words ;
I thought in silence. On those very shores,
Where spectral twilights only flitted now,
An ancestor of mine had won renown,
Whose face and form may have prefigured mine ;
And I was following after a strange host
While he had seen Achilles ! I was born
Long ages after the heroic years,
Haply to fall untimely, and unknown
In some far wilderness. Methought I saw,
Shaped out of uncouth shadows dim and vast,
The two primeval armies camping there ;
Methought their watchfires flushed the blowy night,

And show'd dark fragments of the ruin'd towers,
As two or three far fishers with their boys
Hung up the evening cauldron o'er the coals.
But Reason, swift as lightning, whisper'd me,
'Patience, not Passion, builds up the great heart ;
What hast thou done, or suffer'd?' 'Ah !' I cried—
'Will honour, or dishonour wait on me ?
Glory, or shame, or a swift end of all ?
Oh ! Honour, like the diamond in the dark
Wrapt round by the unlovely rugged rock,
Is won by perils, to be broken through
Ere it can blaze out sunlike.' Then I thought,
As the weak arm grows strong with daily toil,
My soul with custom of heroic thoughts
Will laugh at peril ; and then hourly use,
By little and by little—as the growth
By silent atoms of the human frame
Till the poor infant is a mighty man—
Will make me first o'ercome the dread of death
And then forget the very thought, and then
To seek him out with mockery and disdain,
And catch his dart upon my very sword-point !
Yet though I long'd for it, this change was swift,
Ah ! this was sudden as the rising sea,
That met me oftentimes in the straits at morn
Rolling from the Ægean, when my heart
Beat quicker to behold mine enemies ;
And soon proud resolution, youth, and strength,
Made my arms iron, as I struck my way

Shoreward, with dark locks glittering in the foam.
And now the vision of a bloody time,
That shook me for a moment, made me soon
Strong as the thunder when it follows fast
The fiery zigzags cloven in the cloud.
And as I linger'd by the chieftain's side ;
'Young man,' he said, 'my luck among the isles
Is of the best ; fifty from Tenedos,
A hundred men from Samos, and from Cos,
Sixty from Chios, out of Lesbos none,
Saving thyself : but thou, if I may guess,
Hast in thine eye the star that guideth men
And rules their fates ; and, when my years were thine,
Long days of dusty march, and midnight watch,
My corselet dinted with an hundred fights,
My breast all wrinkled with my many wounds
On nightly trench, hillside, and battleplain,
Scarce won me notice from the Satrap vain,
Whose noble blood was not a drop the less
For all his boasted feats, and bellying words.
Circled by our good swords no harm could reach him ;
And to the eye of the proud King our master
His brainless brows seem'd wreath'd with brave men's bays,
And piled with all the praise of our best deeds.
'Twas hard to bear ; at length, when this old arm
Is shrunken with the fiery breath of War ;
And life, so often perill'd, scarcely seems
My own possession ; and my stormbeat Age
Hath shed away the last leaves of hope's flower—

Such as to dream at ease by my own hearth—
To wind mine arm about some loving heart—
To feel my little ones about my knees—
To see the fond looks of my countrymen
Turn'd on me ; and to sit with faithful friends
And talk of my past cares at eventide—
Oh ! just when Honour, tho' piled up to heaven,
Would scarce outweigh the lifelong load of ill,
Behold I am become a thing to fear.
And this old head, say they, might love to change
The heavy iron for the heavier gold,
And press its gray hairs with a circling crown.
And Pharaoh bids me, for my many years,
And services, take guerdon and repose
In far-off lands. Oh ! if the blood of youth
Stirr'd in me now, the same ambitious motions,
Revenge would, like an unobserved spark,
Breed suddenly more tumult in the state
Than any hopes of empire ; but the days
Are over when my spirit could take fire.
The peace, which is my punishment, I crave.
And I could sit, a solitary man
And listen to the murmurs of the Nile.
Perhaps 'tis best to die as I have lived,
The thunder and the shouting in mine ears,
As it may be to-morrow. I could have hoped,
If I should come out of the strife to be,
To watch the faint wind waft the fisher's sail
Down stream toward the great sea—as my breath

Shall waft the silent remnant of my days
Far as the Ocean of Oblivion—
I know, that, if I lose, or if I win,
This is my last great venture : if I return,
Methinks 'twould be a lovely thing to walk
At morn and even 'twixt my plots of flowers ;
Nurse them as children ; raise their drooping heads
And give them all my care—let it be so.
And, if they pay me with ingratitude,
They cannot quench in me the glorious thought,
Thought still in curved age to comfort me,
That I have served my country, which I loved,
Thro' good and ill, and met its ill with good.
I charge thee, hold before thine eyes for ever,
By night and day, in fiery letters scroll'd,
Not Glory—no ! nor Honour—but this—Duty !
O word that all do utter, few can hear,
Fruit of sweet kernel, though of bitter rind !
O golden sunbeam wandering in the dark ;
Goddess, who frownest with thine onward face,
And, when we look back to thee, smilest sweetly !
My star in youth thou wert, in age thou art :
Thy lamp shall light me down unto the tomb.
And so I charge thee, boy, fix not thy faith
On kingly promise ; but be wise, and fill
Thy conscience with such memories, as will shine,
Like the sweet stars at midnight, in thine age.' ”
I heard no more ; although I yearn'd to hear
How Antimenidas had won that sword.

For hark ! the sweet notes of a harp and flute
Struck in together ; and two dancers sprang
Forward, lithe-limb'd as Hermes, or the Nymph
Who fled before Apollo ; and all eyes
Turn'd to their subtle motions, made to yield
Harmonious utterance to the thoughts within ;
As 'twere an unsung music, silently
Unfolding what the nimble melodies
Spake openly. And every footfall soft,
That touch'd the veined marble, straightway seem'd
Instinct with a wing'd spirit that again
Upbore it ; every pace with beauty breathed
Fell on the eye, as on the charmed ear
The mingled magic of the harped strings
And breathed notes, running through every curve
With skill and lovely change ; as from the heart
A rapt emotion pours into the mind
Fast following thoughts that melt into each other ;
As sinuous currents join and flow together ;
As the green woods wave in the morning wind ;
As the blue waters surge along the shore ;
So one smooth motion pass'd into another.
It seem'd a tale of many passions told
In inarticulate tongue, yet eloquent ;
Life given not to one sculptured form alone
But many statues chasing one another
Thro' labyrinths of grace ! Oh ! there was love
Pleading in truthful sweet humility
To timorous simplicity ; then the boy

And girl in their first trance of sympathy ;
Then swifter motions, faith, hope, eager joy,
And triumph : then a pause, a shuddering pause
Of fear, no longer born of self-mistrust,
But fierce self-love, that sever'd them at once
With gestures of disdain ; for she had seen
As 'twere the shadow of the sickly fiend
That turns love into hate. She flies away
In ever-widening circles ; and he stands
Awhile, mute image of despair and woe.
And now the music deals fantastic airs
With a weird rhythm, and in a harsher key.
And, while he stands thus, in between the two
Starts forward, like the very imp of Ill,
A swart form, ragged-lock'd, and dwarfish mould,
And uncouth mien, yet sinewy in its strength
And lithe activity ; and laughter curls
The parted lips, and mockery rules his limbs
To ribald motions, as he signs to them
With his dusk finger, and they hang their heads ;
And bend their dull eyes sadly to the earth.
But, after a brief silence, once again
Low notes of still a sweeter melody
Rose slowly, through a still-ascending flood,
To a full swell of re-awakening hope,
Rebuoyant blissfulness, and perfect peace.
And, when the rude and sunburnt elf had ceased
His lawless paces, comes a winged child,
Light, as a linnet perching on a rose,

And bends to each in turn with perfect grace,
And a clear song, whose piercing lark-like thrills
Gush'd forth like a first sunbeam, that reveal'd
Love's fair new earth and heaven, yet old as Time,
Green earth of Nature, and blue heaven of Truth.
Again the music peals ; again they raise
Their pensive brows ; again they come together
With ever-narrowing circles, and again
They whirl the timbrels o'er their laughing heads.
They clasp their willing arms about each other,
Sunning each other with delighted eyes
Victoriously ; for Love hath vanquish'd Fear !
When they had ceased there rose a shout from all
That soften'd into melody ; and hark !
The golden voice of Sappho in a song.
For she was there in honour of the feast,
Although her lonely heart was far away.
It was that saddest season of her life,
That lamentable interval, ere yet
The shadow of great sorrow she had borne,
A soul-consuming sickness nigh to death,
Had pass'd away from her ; I knew it not,
Till we were aged in far after years ;
And then she told me all in calmest words,
With steadfast eye and unimpassion'd voice.
But now her best friend Anaktoria
Had join'd the guests ; for she was come from far
To bear her off upon the breezy seas
Between the isles ; and so the gentle Muse

Once more could raise her mournful head and smile :
And all her spirit woke up suddenly :
And with her spirit, like a searching fire,
She threads anew the windings of the dance,
Interpreting the whole with magic art ;
And throwing over the dumb pageantry
The mantle of her fancy ; till the ear
Marvell'd that out of such a thing should spring
Food for the heart as well—a tale of joy
And tears.—And as her wonder-weaving words
Were lifted on the flood-tide of her voice,
And waved along the armed walls, and beat
The tall roof, and went forth into the night,
Some eyes were lit with rapture, some with wrath,
Some rain'd warm drops of pity. I stood apart,
As one who nevermore might hear the like ;
And down beneath the dust of death would bear
That voice away with me, that it might ring
Through the starless midnight of dread Nought
A peal to wake Oblivion, echoing on
For ever and for ever ! And I bow'd
My head upon my hands as one afraid ;
And closed mine eyes, that, shutting out the light,
I might not miss one note of that sweet song
That was divine, and mystically phrased
To them who love not, but an oracle
From heart to heart of lovers ; closed mine eyes,
That their cross sense should not offend mine ears,
Thro' which such magic sank into my soul,

As made all aspects and all motions else
Pale and delightless. When I raised my head
She was not there ; ah ! was it she indeed ?
Or some immortal in a mortal form
Seen for a moment ? Then I saw her pass
With noiseless speed adown the garden walk
Beyond the fountain ; and her moonlit robe
Vanishing through a bowery arch that led
To odorous gloom, like a sad Muse, that shuns
All mortal voices ev'n of praise, and loves
Better to hear the echoes of her soul
In the lone nightingale's ecstatic song
Beneath the stars. Softly I followed her,
Half fearful ; there she sat ; her upward eyes
Catching the quivering moonbeams, as tho' they
Were throbbing pulses of that lord of night
That kindled all the shadows overhead,
Transform'd to tender lightnings ; and I said—

THE PARTING OF ALCÆUS AND SAPPHO

I would tell thee something,
But cannot speak for shame.

If honour to thy heart were dear,
And thy speech not prone to wrong,
Shame would not veil thine eyes, thy tongue
Would utter lawful words that I might hear.

“THE wine is turn'd to water, and the mirth
To mockery ; and the lights are dim, and sound

Of other voices after thine as harsh,
And tuneless, as the noise of beaten brass.
And ev'n the true voice of Philosophy,
While the heart trembles with the fiery touch
Of Beauty, as a lifeless echo sounds ;
Cold Truth a shadow passing from a cloud
Betwixt us and the sun. So I too fled ;
And, as I part to-morrow, perhaps for ever,
Poet to Poet cannot bid farewell,
Better than where the loving nightingale
Fills all the dark with music—hark ! what notes—
Grand, inarticulate, universal tongue ;
Strange utterance of the inexpressible.
Where mortal speech, all words indeed, save thine,
Sappho, thou soul of tenderness, thou soul,
Might fail, must fail ; methinks, such sounds might serve
For wing'd ambassadors betwixt two hearts
That love each other, with their fiery tongues
Interpreting to each the blissful pains
The other feels, yet cannot sign so well.
Oh ! who that heard thee scattering ev'n to-night
Out of that heart thy fancies swift and bright,
Words, that, like sparks from Life unquenchable,
Sank in mine ears ; and were extinguished there,
Only because there follow'd other notes
Beautiful, and more beautiful, that made
The former dark, and cast them out of mind.
And then the great whole, as a host of stars
Well nigh invisible to the mind's eye

From manifold effulgence : who that heard
That mighty song could ever trust thy words,
That out of Memory only sprang the flame
Of inspiration ; no, thou lovest, Sappho.”
She said, “ *I loved, Alcæus ;*” then I answer’d ;
“ Thou lovedst him, but now thou lovest not,
Well do I see ; but, O dear Sappho, know,
That, if those notes shaped not thy living thoughts,
They imaged mine ; and every burning word
Sprang from my heart ;” she said—“ Thou lovest then,
Alcæus ?” “ Take back thine own words,” I cried ;
“ Or give them to me, I will utter them ;
And thou shalt answer ;” but she only said—
“ O then Alcæus knoweth not love at all.”
“ *Sappho I love,*” I answer’d, “ *Sappho I love.*”
“ Then in that love,” she said, “ like to a child,
That strives with tiny steps to run beside
The strong and rapid pace of full-grown men ;
He strives in vain, poor child, and he must faint
And fall ; while they who follow after him
Obey him out of tenderness. And thou,
Who lovest wine, and war, and power and glory,
And poesy, methinks, for glory’s sake,
Hast small space left in thy o’erpeopled heart
For woman’s love ; a torch blown by all winds,
Thy spirit’s wandering flame recoils upon thee,
Making thee fretful by inconstancy ;
While true love, an unruffled altar fire,
Warms more and more all corners of the heart,

And lights that temple up from end to end :
Till all the fuel of humanity—
Not fancies only, not slight hopes and aims—
Are kindled into Poesy ; into
Ambition. But that iron of the soul
Is molten like the metal in the forge,
And then, made malleable, is wrought into
Invulnerable armour, proof to all
The shocks of Time ! such are my dreams of love ;
Oh ! he, who builds on love, may build a world !”
And then, half anger'd, I made answer thus :
“ Well hast thou said, thou lovedst ; for indeed
Thou lov'st no more ; yes, thou hast spoken truth.
Thy heart is dead ; or thou couldst never thus
Like skill'd anatomist, with sober eye,
Search all its fibres and fine network out,
And mark the channels, where the vital blood
Leap'd boiling, with a hard unfeeling eye :
But rather, like the beggar by the way,
Wouldst wait in humble patience, day by day,
The slenderest boon from the beloved hand,
And bless the giver, even though he scorn'd thee.
Thou wouldst not, like the critic's cold bright eye,
Minutely measure the exact proportions
Of a most perfect portrait ; thou wouldst rather,
Like a barbarian, make a very God
Of the most thwart and rudest image of him.
Love is that childlike art, that clothes the Real
With the Ideal, its own simple self ;

Not the poor poet's lifelong grand despair
For ever seeking that he cannot find.
Love, like the great Creator, clothes the Real,
Though but unseemly dust, with its own Life,
And sees that it is good ; and he is blest :
No mortal Artist, who 'twixt that Creation
And his own handiwork, however fair,
Sees an immeasurable Infinite.
And yet I blame thee not ; that sovran heart
Can never die that once hath loved as thine.
But when the inner central flame intense,
Kindled by thundergusts, is quench'd for ever,
The ashes glow, and cast around them life,
That warms the world ; and other sparks arise
Of many loves, each potent unto good.
And every fiery pang that it hath felt
Turns to an arrow of song, that strikes the hearts
Of thousands, winning from them tender sighs
And painless tears, whereon the soul is fed
To blessed growths, and strengthens ; and is won
From iron moods of evil." "Hush !" she said ;
"Better than all the colours of swift words,
To paint the life that inly dwells alone—
The inexpressible knowledge of the heart—
Are those wild notes above us : higher up
The sloping shadows yonder other notes
Make answer, softer, sweeter. Hark ! above
The eager bird is showering wondrous tones ;
That shoot and flash, like exultation now,

Now change to tremulous tenderness, and fall
Thro' quivering anguish to a long lament.
But not for long, oh ! not for long he mourns.
Brief sadness, shadow of too much delight,
Low, passing sigh of summer winds at noon,
Dies in a breath ; and, like the dissonance,
That drowns itself in the full harmony,
Makes the rebuoyant life more glorious
For no far memories, no wild apprehensions,
Nor fear of death, throw shadows of the past
Or future on the present perfect hour.
And its perfection—all in all to him—
Makes heaven of earth, and day of night—a night
Illumined by the flashes of his joy—
And every moment, in its depth and speed,
Like waters flowing rapidly beneath
The unfailing moonshine ; every moment gone
Is follow'd by another, brighter still,
With blisses of the heart. He heeds not whence
They come, nor whither flee ; for he is blest,
Rejoicing in the pulse of time that is.
Ah me ! methinks 'twere better for the poet,
If like this voice of might so glad, so strong,
He could forget the future and the past ;
And of the present make an endless triumph,
Singing of nature, singing of life—”

“ But are there,”

I said, “ no sweet reflexes from past hours ;

No echoes of old tongues, no loving words
 Of lost and loved, to shrine in sacred song?
 No twilight, rich with colours? and no mist
 From the oncoming years, which, tho' they turn
 To tears, are hued afar off, like the hills
 With gold and amethyst? no heights of sorrow,
 To make the lovely present yet more lovely,
 Like the flown tempest, frowning back upon
 The plains rebathed with summer?"

But she answer'd—

"Alas! the fond illusions of the future
 Are shadow'd by the sorrows of the past,
 The unreal by the real; ah! that past
 Hath made the present now so dark to me,
 That would I were the little bird that sings,
 Lightening the darkness with his song—we too
 Can sing, Alcæus; but my songs are now
 Lamps in a tomb, kindled by glorious thoughts;
 But burning by a dead and silent heart.
 Would I could have thy comment; dream for once
 Thou art that bird; that from thy poet soul
 Flows that rare song! come, tell me what it saith."
 "'Tis strange," I said, "the selfsame thought was mine.
 Through all our wild discourse another voice
 Seem'd, as an undercurrent to our speech,
 To fill our pauses up; methought those birds
 Became two lovers, and they communed thus—
 And saith the lover dealing with his love—

‘The fear of losing that which I do prize
Beyond all gems and gold, thy love for me,
Makes me rein in the madness of my own.
Else would I play the tyrant in my love,
And fancy torments for thee, that should cloud
The laughing brow of the fair God Himself,
And make him, in despair and pity, break
His golden arrows, that such things should be ;
And quench his torch in tears, and shake in anger
His curly locks, and rend his rosy plumes.
And when I had drunk up the lees of joy,
And made my spirit satiate with delight,
By feeding on thy lips the noonday long,
Listening thy tuneful tenderness, and searching
For truth the calm blue fountains of thine eyes ;
Sometimes misjudging thy most pleasant speech
With mock suspicion and revenge, I’d wound
Thy tender conscience in its quickest part,
And lay those dear blue eyes in tears. Sometimes,
With sudden change from fondness to disdain,
Like wintry wind in summer, I would shake
Thy powerless goodness yielded up to me
In moments of affection ; and behold,
As one who sees a plot of garden flowers
Torn by a thundergust, the desolation
Of thy young heart in ceaseless agony ;
And with relentless coldness would hold off
The supplicating hand and pleading voice ;
Tho’ to the beatings of thy heart my own

Should answer all the while, three to thy one.
And to mine eyes the fountains of my tears
Should mount, like wells in earthquakes, that o'erflow
Their edges ; till the greatness of the grief,
And sense of anguish wrought by cruel skill,
Should move my soul as much as thine. Ah ! then
I would fly to thee, clasp thee to my heart,
And circle thy sweet neck with yearning arms ;
Whisper thee consolations, such as love
Can only breathe ; drink up thy tears, and lull
Thy tossing heart with mournful tenderness,
Born half of real despair ; which I should feel,
Amid the lightnings of this perilous hour,
The offspring of my phrenzy ; and my sorrow
Should fall upon thee like the dews of even
After a burning noon ; and thy forgiveness
Smiling upon me, like the soften'd light
Of sunset ; and the melancholy calm
Of our reunion, like the windless hours
Of starlight, when the stormy day is done ! ”
I ended—and the sweet trio overhead,
Scared by my tongue,—which ever and anon
Rose rapturously, or overworn at length
By its own passion, sang no more ; but then
That other song from far came clearer up
Swimming along the moonlight : And I said—
“ Now hear the answer.”—“ Spare thee,” she replied—
And laugh'd a sudden laugh, so strange and wild,
Alcæus thought that madness had seized on her—

“ O wayward son of Caicus, how is this ?
How doth this faithful picture of thy soul,
Drawn by thyself, match with thy former words,
That lofty, true, yet vain philosophy
Love lock'd in memory, ruling not thine heart,
But like rare gems too precious to be own'd,
Whose very value makes them valueless ?
Now hear the answer,” she in turn exclaim'd,
“ It is for me to show thee what it saith.
Come, I will voice the dim sweet melody
With fitter speech than ever man could shape ;
Whose softest passion would disport it thus,
And wound while it is winning. O proud man ;
Thou canst not slay weak love by craft or force.
The secret links that bind twin souls together
Are subtle as the light that yields and flies ;
And yet will glitter on the sword that strikes it,
And fills again the void with angel speed.
Beaten behind the cloud of angry frowns
It lives and hopes ; and will break madly through,
And make a contrast sweeter than full noon.
Tears cannot drown it, but returning days
Lift up its head, like the pale bells of spring,
That early come, and rarest breathe, and are
Remember'd latest ; and sharp frosts of scorn
That shed its leaves, and sear the naked stem,
Barren as death, yet leave the roots unharmed,
Which with the first warm glances of the year,
Bud as the vine, and once again will weep

Tears like the precious vintage, warm with life ;
Tho' the drear interval be dead and cold.
And tell me, O proud man, what wins thee thus
Back to thy troth, and suns thy pride away.
Is it not Beauty? picture for the eye
To feast on, while the heart is far away?
A flower—no more—but when the flower is sere,
And all its rose-hues, like the blood of youth,
Are blench'd within it, and it yields no breath
For pleasure, like first girlhood's songful voice ;
When the lithe form is curved, and the brow
Is smooth no more, and the first snowflakes fall
Amid the dark clouds of the flowing hair.
It is one thing to see the lovely face
Look up to thee a moment after tears ;
Another to look on it after years.
Say, should the old Love, ev'n though unforgot,
Knock at thy gate, and say—' Dear friend, I come ;
But found the way so rough, I fear the hours
I counted on for travel have changed to years.
Or was it but a fancy?—for my heart
Calls back, as yesterday, the merry morn
When first we met—and now, I think, I dream'd,
For all my heart is happy, as of old,
At sight of thee ! ah no ! 'tis but a day.
Wouldst thou fold her to thine unshaken heart ;
And, looking thro' the dim eyes, only see
The inextinguishable star within?
Wouldst thou not hold her from thee with thine arm ;

And look, as on a picture marr'd by time,
Silently casting up the worth of that
Which once was priceless? turn it to the wall,
And let another picture take its place?
I see an old man leaning on a staff;
From a crazed bark he steps upon the shore;
He looks around him; and his eyes are dim
With wandering in waste lands, his raiment stain'd
With many shipwrecks; but his faithful heart
Forgets the days between, and only sees
The summer mountains, and the viny cot
Of one who once did love him; he is there—
For in the darkness he could search it out—
But lo! there is no cot, but a fair house
With many halls; he weeps and turns away.
But she hath seen him from the topmost tower;
She hath forgotten all the days between;
She hath run down and clasp'd him in her arms,
And she hath clothed him in fair cloth of gold,
And from her heart shed on him once again
The youth long fled; her love hath wrought a charm.
She looks not back into the Past, but on
Into the Everlasting; and she sees
The selfsame boy and girl, who went of old
Forth in the morn together, and then saw
No more each other till their end of days,
The selfsame boy and girl, but hand in hand,
Growing in youth for ever and in joy,
Climbing the mountain slopes to meet the Dawn!"

IV

And, when the night was far advanced, the youths,
Ere parting, set beneath a niche apart
An upright lance, and cross'd it with another,
Whence hung two empty bowls at either end,
Much like to scales ; and underneath they placed
Twin vessels brimm'd with water, in the midst
Whereof two brazen statues stood immersed.
The youths stood round intent upon their play,¹
Each with a cup of wine held in his hand,
To fling into the bowls suspended from
The cross-lance, that the weight might bear them down
To strike the statues on their heads of brass.
For in the pastime was an augury :
And he who threw his wine, and spilt it least,
And struck the bowl down on the head of brass
With the most force, was master of the game ;
And he would reign unrivall'd in the heart
Of his beloved. So they sped their sport
With laughter, and with shouting : some had miss'd
Their mark, and all their wine was shed aside,
And stain'd the marble floor ; some hit the edge,
And tilted up the bowl ; some shook with mirth,
And cast the wine with so unsteady hand
That part was splash'd upon the robes of friends,

¹ See note at end of volume.

And part on their own sandals ; one or two
Emptied their goblets with a better sight ;
But not with force to make the head beneath
Ring to the bowl, and totter : last came he
Who own'd the omen most ; he had no fear
That he should fail ; and, if he fail'd, what then ?
He had no fear : all his young heart was strong
In faith : was it not twofold, his and hers ?
Laughing he poised his chalice, and he threw
With such sure aim that all the golden rain
Fell, without loss of one of its bright drops,
Right in the middle of the pendent bowl ;
That lighting on the brazen head below
Made all the chamber echo to the clang,
The image totter'd, and the water waved,
And every voice gave " Victory !" with a shout !

V

And then I rose, and draining at a draught
A goblet brimm'd with bright Methymna wine,
Sang with a kindling eye, and hearty voice
My last new song, that mingled farewell sighs
With shouts of victory—clanging at every pause
A javelin on a shield—but, ere it ceased,
One in a whisper bade me turn and mark
An unexpected guest ; and I sat fixed
Like chidden schoolboy by the sombre eye

And pale calm brows of Pittacus, who bending
With temper'd grace, and with a half-smile, said ;
“ Pardon me, Countrymen, if I make bold,
Now the symposium is o'er, to venture
Upon this feast of friends ; for I was loath
To mar a merrymaking, and to jar
Your happy songs, and pleasant praise of wine,
An owl amid the summer nightingales.
Your wine is its own warrant ; it hath heart
And body like a hero's ; but the heart
Heroic needs it not ; and in the coward's
It leaves a hollow like a raging fire,
That roars and leaves white ashes in its place.
Who shall be sure, that, when the wine is out,
The spirit shall be in ? oh ! noble acts
Not seldom lag after adventurous words,
And songs in praise of it ; and wine and song
Have this in common, something that inspires,
And nothing that sustains : therefore the more,
Like two frail girls that clasp each other's waists,
Each staying each up the hillside, till both
Are stopt for lack of breath, or fall together.
And wine and song may symbolize each other.
Wine pour'd into the heart lifts up like song ;
Song flowing from the heart exalts like wine.
And now for graver matter from the Troas.
Letters this day have reach'd us of much moment ;
Proud Athens, like a kraken from the deep,
Is clutching with long arms the capes and isles,

Hungry for all Ionia ; and bears down
Upon Sigeium with an armed host,
Led by one Phrynon, who hath won a crown
Sometime beneath Olympus at the games ;
And like a little Agamemnon comes
To sweep into his net that famous shore,
And stamp his heel on our forefathers' dust.
I have a thought, to sweep him into mine.
I think that ye have known me from my youth ;
No boaster I—unless this be a boast—
And, if I am, then let me pride myself
In boasting that I ever loved to shield
The weak against the proud.”—He turn'd and said—
“ Alcæus !” and there play'd upon his lip
A dubious smile—“ Alcæus ! I have heard
Thee sing, and strike the strings to noble words ;
And noble deeds are then most surely done,
When all the soul is drunk with sounds divine ;
And now there shall be proof of me and thee.
For hark !” he said, and rose with lips comprest,
And forehead wrinkled with a sudden frown ;
“ Hearest thou not the tread of armed men ?
’Tis Myrsilus himself ; who, though he be,—
I shame to say it,—of my class the people,
Yet is the poor man’s enemy, and the foe
Of all just men. What I am known to be
I may proclaim, without self-flatteries.
I am the friend of Honour, and the Gods,
And, being such, the foe of Myrsilus.

And, if thou and thy kin are of the nobles,
I'll sooner join thee in opposing him,
The adversary of order, and of man,
Than gain a doubtful triumph of mine own
By siding with him ; and in winning lose
My self-approval, and uphold dishonour.
And Myrsilus inherits from his sire,
And grandsire, taints of falsehood : some remember
The latter with the hod upon his head
In the hot sun ; and many a tale of bricks
He counted through the weary hours of noon ;
And, had he done no more, he might have lived
And died forgotten, but without reproach.
But, as the snake first grovels in the dust,
Then springs, and bites, he pilfer'd from the stores
Of others ; and by little and by little
Piled bricks enough to build himself a house ;
Then bought a patch of land, and made a garden
Of potherbs ; and, as still the city grew,
He sold it to the Archon ; and so gain'd
Enough to buy a brickyard for himself :
Then from his kilns whole streets were builded up.
And at his death the father of this tyrant
Inherited wherewith to make them his.
Then avarice seized him, and he piled up gold
As once his sire had stones ; and this his son
Now trowels gold, as his forefathers lime,
And wastes instead of spares. So Time brings round
The winter, spring, and summer ; after that

The whole year flies away in wither'd leaves ;
And that small seed of lies, sown early, breeds
The crop of crimes to be hereafter reap'd
In blood. And now, methinks, his hour is come ;
The Gods have will'd it so, if ye be men !”

MYRSILUS

'Tis time to hand the cup around,
To sing, to dance, to shake the ground.
For Myrsilus is dead !—ALCÆUS.

HE rose—drew back the crimson-folded veil,
That screen'd the hall of armour ; and we saw
Along the moonlight, thro' the peristyle,
And 'twixt the columns of the outer court,
The stealthy motions of a helmed band,
And faintly heard their tread : “ For he hath come
To be avenged on ye,” said Pittacus,
“ For lending aid unto the countryfolk
In rescuing the young bride ; to fire this dwelling,
And seize upon the newly-wedded spouse
Of Citharus, for the girl whom he hath lost,
The fisher's daughter—this I fully know
From faithful witnesses, my proper ears.
' Know that to-morrow is the marriage-feast
Of Citharus,' he said : ‘ then will I be
Avenged for this their deed and seize the maid
Before her lover's eyes ; for I will steal
Upon them like a mountain cat at even,

Soft-footed, and unheard.'"—Just then the band
Near'd us with uproar, and with riotous songs,
And cymbals clash'd, and shields.—“But see he comes,
Not as a cat, but one who is possess'd
By his own spirit ; as though it were a fiend
Lashing him o'er a cliff into the sea.
And, if the Fates had not decreed his doom,
New wine hath dazed him, so he cannot steer
His brain more than his feet, so he must fall ;
Then fear not.” But the women raised their arms,
And shriek'd ; the young bride fell upon the neck
Of her young spouse : then suddenly rose up,
Cast off the fearful nature that was hers,
And put on a new beauty. Pallas-like
Her angry eyes dilated, and sent forth
Sparkles of fire ; and her uplifted arm,
Snatching a javelin from the bristled wall,
Look'd fearless toward the foe ; and, as the moon
Shone down, and mingling with the lamplight, show'd
Dimly the onward host to those within,
A shout rose from their side, that overwhelm'd
The cries of the scared girls and beaten shields.
But Pittacus, the wonder of us all,
Who seem'd the soul of us, strode thro' the hall ;
And, drawing back upon the opposite side
The awning hanging 'twixt us and the garden,
For one brief moment only, and no more,
Show'd us, in timely ambush lurking there,
Another steely cohort ; who had scaled

The outer wall, and waited stilly now
The orders of their chief, as he came round
The public way, and enter'd by the gate.
So then we stood between the adverse hosts
Of iron-plated men ; our carven vessels,
Our banquet garlands, and our crowned brows
Shone in the red light of the candelabras,
As 'twere a little isle of flowers, whereon
Wild torrents are descending. Then a voice
Cried ; " Open to the Archon " ; and their arms
Beat on the barred gate—and Pittacus—
" I pray ye, let no guest forsake his seat,
No damsel be afraid " : and he himself
Went forward to receive him ; and Myrsilus
Stept thro' the portico into the hall
With a firm step and haughty head, as one
Who made his office do what he, the man,
Had never dared at all ; for he was chief.
But his eye wander'd ; and that lamp of thought
Seem'd wavering in the wind of public scorn.
And he took refuge in that feigned sense
Of outward majesty, which, as a man,
He own'd no more ; he moved towards the host.
While silence held the rest, Alcæus said—
" If thou com'st not an uninvited guest,
Though, it may be, a friendly one withal,
O Myrsilus, what pressure in the state
Can be so instant, as to break this hour
Of midnight, sacred to the mysteries

Of friendship, love, and home? The day is due
To public matters"? With a sneer, and snarl,
He answer'd :—" If my presence gives offence,
I neither wonder, nor forgo the right
Which is at once my duty to the state,
To visit guilt ev'n at its banquet tables,
And merrymakings ;—I am Chief of Law !
And thou of its offenders, with thy kin !"
" Be seated, O my Lord," said Citharus.
" It ill beseems that we, who stand accused
Of heavy crime, should keep our seats, while thou,
The minister of Justice and of Mercy,
Art all unhonour'd in the midst of us."
And under a large shield of silver, boss'd
With the heroic deeds of ancient men,
They set a throne above the banquet seats ;
And spread it with some gorgeous draperies
Of gold and silver tissue ; there they led him,
And bow'd the knee to him. He swoln with pride
Rose from his seat, and said : " 'Tis not for nought
The common voice of all this land hath chosen
Me its chief ruler—me, whose house and name
Hath risen, and, I may say, become renown'd,
Tho' not for deeds of arms—trophies like these
I see around me, and, save this company,
Which make the homes of reasonable men
Look, as it were, a shambles stuck with tools
Of slaughter ; and which violence and ambition,
Not the necessities of nature, made

For lawless ends, not for our skill and labour ;
Which have by little and little, like the seeds
Of Autumn, borne to us the abundant harvest
Of riches and prosperity.—I say
'Tis not for nought the people made me Chief,
For now the nobles are become the cry
Through all the land : in humbler station we
Ourselves have suffer'd uncomplainingly
The scorn of those, who, having never ate
The bread of toil, or in their actions won
A blessing from the people, call the blood,
That lazily is creeping thro' their veins,
And the unwrinkled front of secular sloth,
The seals and types of majesty : methinks,
The honour which they claim belongs to those
Who plough, sow, reap ; to those who give us bread ;
To the vine-gatherer who serves our wine ;
The weaver who apparels us, and warms ;
The woodcutter who feeds our furnaces ;
The mason who piles up our palaces.
In truth," he said, circling in his disdain
The silent company—"ye are not men,
Ye needy beggars, in your bonnets flaunting
Pride for a plume ; which, like the homeless ones,
Ye doff not at the corners of the streets
Meekly to catch in it the alms flung to ye,
But wave it in the wind ; while your delights,
Fruit of the tears and sweat of humble men,
Are laid before ye. I boast not of my worth—

But if I did, who shall gainsay me, who ?
I will not boast of that pre-eminence
Which my forefathers' worth hath won for me,
The station which I hold, and, but for them,
I had not held : but this I say, that those,
Who have subdued the earth, adorn'd and spread
The city, as mine ancestors have done,
Merit exalted honour ; but who are they
Who weave vain songs, interpret oracles ?
Do the poor fill their bellies with the dust
And cobwebs of the sages, or the singers ?
True, if the beggarman were minstrel too,
Or sophist, then the cobbler, or the weaver
Might pause a moment on his way, to throw him
A small coin for his tricks—as we are wont,
For their fantastic motions and grimaces,
To laugh at apes from Afric—these are not
The properties and functions of such men
As claim nobility, and should lord it o'er ye.
But when the man of nothings doth no more
Shelter himself in shadow of negations ;
But, like a hunter of his kind, goes forth
To do all evil ; like a spider spins
His fatal meshes, and then runs and slays,
Returning with the bodies and the souls
Of men, he is no longer to be scorn'd
And suffer'd, but a giant to be met
By outstretch'd arm of Law." And, as he spoke,
Half the assembly with mock-wonderment

Answer'd him in a shout ; he paused, and look'd
About him shrewdly ; heard their loud applause ;
And for a breath he stood irresolute.
Soon, strengthen'd by his fix'd resolve, he cried ;—
“Stand forth, I charge ye, Alcæus, Citharus,
And Antimenidas, if he be here,
Return'd at last : stand forth, for on ye lie
Murder and outrage. 'Twas but yesterday
A single horseman spurr'd into the city
At even, bearing the ill tidings to us
That there was lamentation in the hills ;
A bridal had been broken, and the bridegroom
Slain, and the bride borne off, and none knew whither.
Though full of cares, we took an escort—rode
Up to my countryhouse, hard by the scene
Of violence—found our dwelling had been forced
By these same rioters—there were bloody marks
Upon the marbles—flagons overturn'd,
And winecups on the pavement—all disorder—
We have with us a witness who brings home
To ye this charge, together with bloodguilt.
Ye have laid violent hands on guiltless men.
And we have witnesses that yestereven
Thou and thy kinsmen lay in wait to slay
A village bridegroom in a narrow way
Defenceless, unprepared ; and from him reft
His late-espoused bride.” “Thy witnesses,”
Alcæus said—“can witness also this ;
We were unarm'd as they—that they were many—

While we were few—that we and they were friends—
And that the robbers, whosoe'er they be,
Fled from our naked hands—wherefore we know
That black intent was in the heart of each
Sharp as a poison'd dart—when, who should shield
The weak from wrong, is foremost to offend,
He needs a something more than sword and spear,
And guard about him, to make head against
The anger of just hearts aroused—the scorn
Of those, who will not see them trodden down
Beneath the iron heels of lawless men,
Though arm'd with sword and spear—is it not so?
One drew a dagger on me; but I snatch'd it
From his unsteady hand, trembling with guilt,
Or wine, or both; or then he would have slain
The unhappy boy, who fell a moment after
Struck by a villain slave—his only crime
That he had rescued from a robber's hand,
At peril of his life, the loving girl
Whose life he held more precious than his own.
One drew a dagger on me—who was he?
For we and these poor men were all unarm'd!”
Then Myrsilus—“O Alcæus, this is base;
The desperate cunning of a frighten'd child,
Who would retort the charge he can't deny
O son of Caicus, I fear thou liest;
Knowing that what thou dost impute to them
Thyself hast acted—there are who testify
Two brothers snatch'd from us the outraged maid

Whom we had saved ; one set her on a steed,
And bore her to the city's secret holds ;
There to conceal her, henceforth to become
The slave of lawless pleasures, having slain
Her youthful spouse, whom, riding from the hills,
We found stretch'd cold upon the public way,
Silent in death, or with his dying lips
He had condemn'd thee :"—“ Shameless, without
conscience ;”

The astonish'd brothers whisper'd to each other—

“ His witnesses must needs be his own slaves,
Whom terror and self-love have urged to weave
A web of lies, as flimsy and as vain
As the air-bubble which a breath will burst.

But thou art Archon, sovran guard of Truth,
And, being so, must sure tell truth—so be it.”

Then turning round, and in a loud clear voice—

“ But say, my Lord, who hath arraign'd us, who ?”

“ Mark, mark !” said Myrsilus, with mocking tongue ;

“ He doth no more deny it ! know then, Poet,

We have a witness, who shall say him nay ?

Even our cupbearer ; for he is wont

With one or two, his fellow servitors,

To go before us to our countryhouse ;

To make all ready for us, ere we go forth

To take our pastime there, as was our purpose

On that same evil day, that very day,

Had not ill tidings held us in the town.

Come forward, man, I say ;” and from the crowd

Stole one with wavering eye, and downcast look.
And, like a schoolboy hurrying o'er his task,
That he may not forget it, with thick speech,
As one o'ercome with wine, he utter'd thus—
“Myself beheld the lamentable deed.
Returning to the hills we heard the riot ;
Saw bloodshed from the terrace where we sat,
Breathing the summer twilight ; and I said—
‘ Hush, friend ; the Guardian of this noble isle
And public peace, methinks, had better station
Arm'd men among the vineyards, and the woods,
If such things be ; we are too late to save
The hapless youth, or to avenge his bride
By armed presence ; let us listen then,
If any chance may serve to give us clue
To the offenders, doubtless of the nobles.’
I stood upon the terrace that o'erhangs
The hollow way that winds into the hills ;
And heard the tongues of two or three in converse.
I said—‘ I needs must know them for they call
Each other by their names ’ ; and Citharus said,
‘ Alcæus, we have left undone a deed,
Whose lack outweighs all good that we have done.
The girl is safe ; the boy will speak no more ;
The horseman is escaped, and we did ill
To spare his accursed life.’ ”

So saying he
Slunk back into the crowd, and was not seen.

Then Myrsilus—"Such were the very words,
And they declare ye guilty of this act,
If any proof can be"—whereat Alcæus
With a despairing gesture smote his brow,
And, turning unto Pittacus, he said—
"The Gods are arm'd against us, O my friend,
These very words were spoken;" but he answer'd :—
"Fret not thyself, nor chafe; but wait in patience
The signals of the Gods, who can defend
The right, when hope is fled; fret not thyself;
They make the darkest moment turn to dawn."
Then Myrsilus: "Dost thou deny the words?"
"The spirit, not the letter, I disown.
The words were truly spoken; but the sense
Was this: the girl being saved, her lover slain,
In piteous indignation, and regret
We all were held, that the foul ravisher
Had not been done to death, as was his meet;
And blood for blood been taken then and there."
Then Myrsilus with scornful look and tone :—
"O most inventive, high poetic art!
The horseman then, who bore to us the tale,
Himself hath done the deed!" We answer'd him
Together with one voice, "Thou say'st; and truly.
We saw him do it; and not only we,
But all the villagers upon the spot
Beheld it, and the hamlets higher up.
The poor slain youth, hoping his coming bride
Beheld it, (but his tongue is silent now),

All these, my Lord, were witnesses as we.”
“All are not needed ; are there here who back thee
In this thy bold diversion ?” “O my Lord ;
Being innocent of this most cursed act ;
Expecting not thy presence, and engaged
In merrymaking, we could ne’er have dreamt
’Twas needful to defend ourselves. Moreover,
That night of the sad spousal we had come
Late from Methymna, when the fray began.
’Twas wellnigh dark ; the names of any there
We know not ; and their faces dimly seen
Live not in our remembrance ; time we need
To seek the vouchers who were present there.
I doubt not ’twill be easy ; but they cannot
Answer thee now.” “And if they too were here,”
Cried Myrsilus, “to echo all thy speech,
Confirming with their voices thy denial,
What proof have we that thou and they are not
At seesaw with collusion, predetermin’d
To front occasion boldly ? We hold good
The testimony of our partisans
At least as any other ; and, were craft
Not in base hearts, we hold it more trustworthy
Than any rustic wits that, in the blaze
And smoke of their own folly, haply fed
By too much drink, see double, if at all,
And know not what they see : and more ; we hear
That since the murder the poor girl is dead—
Thus wrong breeds wrong, and threefold makes your crime—

Adding to direful deeds the dread effects
That follow on the same—dead is she, dead !
Ay even of very woe !” “ ’Tis horrible !”
Surely we cried, “ ’tis horrible ! but who
Hath rumour’d this new fear ? ’tis true, ’tis true,
That the poor youth is slain ; but for the girl—”
“ Patience, my friend, and let the Archon speak,”
Said Pittacus—“ I speak,” said Myrsilus,
“ On testimony not to be gainsaid.”
He paused, and, signing to an armed man ;—
“ Where are the two old folks ? Make haste ; bring up
The fisherman, the father of the girl ;
And with him bring the mother of the boy.
Behold them pass in, those two stricken souls,
The widow’d mother, and the white-hair’d sire,
More aged than by an added score of years
Through their fresh grief.” But who is she, that pale
And stricken form, who leans upon his arm,
Shivering and smiling fitfully a smile,
Wan as the glitter of an icicle
Beside the old man’s grief ? Is this the maid,
Who, but a few bright morns ago, was one
No more familiar with despair and death
In her Maytime, than is the curly vine
Climbing about a cypress ? Yes, ’tis she.
The tyrant saw her not ; but others saw.
Ev’n while he spoke, with soundless foot she moved
Behind a shadowy column, and was not seen.
“ Look at her, Tyrant, see what thou hast done !

Is this the one to feast thy weary eyes?
 To sing to thee, to dance to thee? Is she
 Worth loving now? And if not, hast thou aught
 Of pity left in thee to take its place?
 Or only fear?" Then Myrsilus pursued:—
 "It was a moment, when the pressing call
 Of matters appertaining to the war
 Summon'd me to the Council; for the Elders
 Would meet upon the instant—perhaps even then
 Were met—when suddenly I saw before me
 This mournful man, the father of the girl,
 With sleepless eyes that had been drain'd of tears,
 His two hands prest upon his aching brow,
 Bow'd nigh to doom by nights and days of sorrow.
 He stood at dusk beneath the portico
 Of my own dwelling; and he wail'd and said;—
 'Myrsilus, O Myrsilus, the power
 Is thine for good or evil; help me to justice,
 If not to vengeance; and the Gods will give thee
 Eternal life for it! I am her father.
 Alas! my joy is dead, my girl is slain;
 She was my only child, 'tis horrible!
 She was the blessed child of my old age,
 The gift her dying mother left to me.'
 I promised justice; and I said, 'To-night
 Ye shall behold the workers of this wrong.
 I shall not leave redress of such a deed
 To private hands; I go to seize upon them,
 And take them as my prisoners; ye may follow,

Thou, and thy friends and kinsfolk, if ye will.
And, as your wrongs are louder than all law,
I counsel ye not to forgo so fair
Occasion to avenge ye ; and the laws
Will hardly touch a father, who in just
And natural anger slays with his own hand
The slayer of his child : and know to-night
They hold a marriage-feast, and will rejoice,
Remembering not your anguish, or the ill
That they have done : the Gods will bless ye for it,
If ye do save them lightning, and cut short
In retribution their accursed mirth !'
And then I said ; 'The Council waits for me ;
I must away ;' but turn'd and spake again ;
'Come back when thirty minutes are gone by,
Ere yet the moon is up ; for I shall need thee
In a grave matter ;' didst thou not return ?
And gave I not torn from my tablets to thee
A leaf well folded in a linen cloth,
Together with my ring, for token sure
The writing came from me ? and bade thee bear it
A furlong out beyond the western gate ;
And there deliver it at the palace door
Of one my friend ? Give ear unto my words.
And, when I charged thee come to me again
Bearing his answer, and the ring I gave thee,
Didst thou not play me false, and make away ?
When I tore off the wrap, the writing said
The ring was there ; but lo ! the ring was not.

And then I shouted, 'Stay the messenger.'
The slave replied; 'Thus saith the doorkeeper;
'Just as the letter came into thy hand
He parted swiftly, and the night is dark.''
So I was left to wonder!" The old man
Stood blank with sudden terror; and 'twixt that,
And the dull ache of sorrow, found no words
More than a weary babe. Again he cried;
"The ring, the ring!" then answered the old man;
"My Lord, we came for justice; and we came
At thine own summons; after weary days,
And nights of anguish, we have dragg'd our grief
Before thee; and we turn upon thee now
Despairing eyes, that would, they know not what.
Thou canst not give us comfort; and revenge
In hearts like ours burns low amid the tears,
And sighs of our bereavements; and the Gods
Bear witness for us that we never saw
The thing of which thou speakest; and, O Heaven!
Now hast thou laid upon us a new load
To press us to the earth: this is some witchcraft,
Some weird fatality to blind our eyes,
And make our reason helpless. O ill day
That ever brought us hither: is the web
Of treason, spotted with our children's blood,
Now to be cast on us? on us who lie
Low in our misery, inconsolable!
We never look'd for this! we pray thee spare us;
And mock us not, if there be no redress.

We can forgo the triumph young men love.
The miserable have no eyes to see
The evil-doers suffer in their turn.
For, though we might, these aged hearts, made dark
By our afflictions, can have small delight
In bloody recompenses, or revenge ;
Or triumph in the ruin even of those
Who have destroyed us. Let us part, and lay
Our vexed hearts by those who sleep the sleep
That never wakes ; though poor we are not base.
The poor man, losing honour, loses more
Than the big jewel in a crown ; for so
He loses that he hath preserved with care ;
And held against all subtleties, all wiles
Of his own soul, all perils from without ;
And losing that, my Lord, he loses all—”
“ Is this man mad with grief,” said Myrsilus ;
“ That he is double to himself, and flouts
His own experience but a few hours old ?
There is the sheepskin, and the woollen cap,
The same even to the rent upon the edge ;
The same deep thoughtful eyes which I look'd into
Under my very doorposts yestereven
But one ; and yet he mocks me—why I know not—
And apes oblivion of himself, and me,
And my words and his own—this—”

“ True, O Archon ;”
Said Pittacus, “ ’tis strange, ’tis passing strange.

And yet it may seem stranger to thee still
 If what was said in secret I have heard.
 And what thou spakest to him, he to thee,
 I should remember, though he hath forgot.
 And that the tongue and soul of this old man
 Should now be my possessions—”

“ Hold !” he cried ;

“ Hast thou drunk savage brewings, or have I
 This night ; that substances to shadows turn,
 Shadows to substances ! the senses sleep,
 And reason is unseated ? but beware,
 Trifle not with me. As for thee, old man,
 In whose behoof I waste the precious hours
 In threatening times, call up thy drowned wits :
 Make haste ; and now remember what concerns
 Thee more than me ; dost think there are no toils
 For rulers of the people but to hear
 The beggars whine ? I am myself to blame.
 I was a fool to trust him with a gem,
 Whose price would purchase the old fisherman
 New nets, and boats, or buy a field for him—”
 “ Permit me, O my Lord, but to fulfil
 My words,” said Pittacus ; “ which were not boastful.
 And let me burnish the dead memory
 Of this poor man.—Beneath the portico—”
 But Myrsilus sat fix’d with staring eyes,—
 As one who hears an echo to his thought
 Reverberate from the walls of his own chamber.—

One moment, pale as with a sudden fear,
Then red with rage he shouted ; “ What am I ?
Do I sit here as judge or criminal ?
Better declare that I, the Archon, I
Have done this murder, than to coin such speech.
If this old man hath breathed into thine ear
Words which he now remembers not, ’tis like
His memory may have failed quite from the first,
Or that he framed a lie for evil ends,
Of words not spoken at all.” Then Pittacus :
“ Patience, O noble Archon, yet awhile.
All shall be satisfied, even thou thyself.
Later the selfsame night of the ill deed,
Three hours from midnight, I myself and slave—”
Then Myrsilus arose, his eyes aflame
With angry fears, and shouted, “ No more words !
The case is clear, methinks ; there is no need
Deeper to drive into the night, when matters
Of vaster moment press us.” “ And to me,”
Said Pittacus, “ the case is clear ; that horseman—”
“ Advance, and seize your prisoners, Guard, I say,”
Cried Myrsilus ; “ this is a night of shame ;
My noble hosts, that under your own roof,
Rather than in full Council at noonday,
Within the Hall of Elders, your dishonour
Should be proclaimed—and sentenced—is your gain ;
Tho’ justice somewhat lose in the exchange.
We would not press you harder, nor afflict
With stings of public scorn the fallen pride

Of yet a noble house, whom there awaits
A certain doom ; for justice must be done,
Though mercy mingle with it. And what doom,
My countrymen, what doom is fittest for him,
Who scorns the laws, and is above all law,
Sheds blameless blood, tramples on lowly hearts ?
And is himself of those who name themselves
Noble ? whose name is as a tower of strength ;
From whose high station, as from heaven itself,
Pity should fall—what doom is due to him ?”
“ Death !” said the voice of one invisible—
“ Death !” from the shadow other voices cried—
“ And we say, ‘ Death ’ ! and are but as the sound
That echoes to a trumpet, when we say ;
As from the choicest flowers in all the garden
We gather for a sacrifice, so ye,
Who are the foremost in this noble isle,
In station, and in riches, and in spirit,
Which Nature gave ye as a crown of flowers,
O ye must yield your lives ; ay, blood for blood,
To mark the day, and make it memorable.
Death to the noble who ignobly lives,
Death to the highborn robber, death to pride.”
“ Death to Myrsilus ! tyrant ; thine own tongue
Hath judged thee and condemn’d—thou art the Man !”
Cried Pittacus—but Myrsilus pluck’d down
A javelin from the wall, and launch’d it forth
With perilous might ; but with unsteady eye,
So that it flew above the nearer heads,

Sparing the life of him who was the mark,
But struck the false cupbearer, far withdrawn,
Between the eyes ; and he fell with a groan.
Then Antimenidas with sudden bound
Sprang forward, waving high above his head
The mighty scimitar, with ivory hilt,
Brought from the east, and rainbow colours play'd
Upon it from the lamps ; he stood behind
The throne of Myrsilus, and held it high
Above his head ; and when the tyrant glared,
And would have spoken, higher still it rose,
As though it would come down upon his neck,
If but one word were utter'd.

II

Then I saw
Myrsilus from underneath his robe
Draw forth a trumpet, raise it to his lips,
And blow a blast that made the armour ring.
And suddenly, as from the gorge of Night,
There came a cry in answer, that turn'd pale
The lips of the bystanders, but not so
The tyrant and his henchmen. He rose up
With scorn upon his lip : “ Ha ! ha ! ” he cried,
“ Methinks the chase is ended, and the game
Is ready for the hunters ! ” As he spoke
Pittacus stept forth again ; drew back
The veil that hung between us and the garden,

And with a shout he signall'd thro' the dark ;
" Welcome ! I wait ye ! " And another shout
Of a whole host, as of a bursting flood,
Gave answer, " We are here, long life to thee ! "
And now the moonlight, mingling with the lamps,
Shimmer'd on the arms and helmed heads
Of yet another band ; swiftly they near'd ;
And Pittacus turning to the tyrant ; " Who
Are now the hunters, and who are the game ? "
So saying, he vanish'd in the gathering crowd.
The tyrant shouted, " Who are on my side ? "
But none made answer ; for the armed guard
Who came obedient, though unwise, to aid
Their lord, had heard wise words from Pittacus,
While Myrsilus was boasting of himself.
And now the wine of that old love was sour'd
By the sad tale into its opposite ;
And the arm'd cohort who had leapt the wall
Were well prepared to fling down arms of brass,
And stretch forth arms of nature to their brothers.
But two or three, the tyrant's chosen friends,
Who rode forth, and who sat at meat with him,
And knew that they must live or die with him,
Unwitting of the change those words had wrought,
And fill'd with wrath, and trusting to be back'd
By arms, rose to lay violent hands upon
The bridal guests. But, ere the foremost man
Could touch the robe of Citharus, or his friends,
A javelin like a starflash, glanced across

The banquet-table, and smote him on the breast.
The tyrant whisper'd to a kinsman near,
To hasten forward, and be swift to stay
The flying maids. They with a wailing cry
Threw up their arms in piteous flight, and sought
The shelter of the shadows ; and I saw
The peaceful Citharus cast away all fear !
Love lent him strength against the threatening bulk
Of yet another foe ; he snatch'd a cup,
Fill'd it with wine, and dash'd it in his eyes.
Half blind he stumbled o'er a fallen stool ;
Then Citharus grasp'd a dagger from the wall ;
And while he held it lifted in the act
To strike it home, the ivory-hilted sword
Whirl'd by the arm of Antimenidas
Lighten'd between ; and swiftly rushing down
Drown'd the last traitor's curses in his blood.
" 'Tis well," he said, " that I have slain this man ;
If thou hadst done it, 'twould have been to thee
An arrow in thy heart, an evil dream
To haunt thee ; but nor thou, nor any here
Can call it vengeance, for 'tis only justice !"
A moment's silence, and a plaining cry
Came from the garden side ; we turn'd and saw
The white robes of the bridemaids hurrying thro'
The darkness of the vineyards, and a slope
Of olivewood behind ; and there they stood,
And mourn'd, and raised their clasp'd hands to the
stars,

III

Then once more, to the wonder of us all,
That fisher, whom the guard had borne away,
Came back into our midst ; and Myrsilus,
Whose mere astonishment broke through all fears ;
“ What ! do I see thee yet again, old man ;
Did I not bid them bind thee, bear thee off,
And chain thee ? ” “ True, ” he answer’d, “ true, my lord ;
But I remember now what I forgot—
Pardon the folly of a weak old man—
Thou gavest me the tablets and the ring. ”—
“ Then hand them back, ” cried Myrsilus in wrath.
“ Not so, my lord ; saving this company,
I will read out the written characters. ”—
“ What ! is it so, and I too knew it not ? ”
Mutter’d the tyrant to his secret soul ;
“ He reads, he reads my words ! ” And then aloud ;
“ Take him away ; I tell ye he is mad. ”
Truly it seem’d that fisherman had lost
The wavering reason that his woes had left ;
He laugh’d a phrenzied laugh, he laugh’d aloud,
And for a moment all the multitude
Stood open-mouth’d with awe. Then, swift as sight,
He cast off from him the unsightly cap,
And sheepskin, his white hair, and hoary beard,
And stood forth there, the dark-eyed Pittacus.
A moment there was silence, and he said ;
“ I have thrown off the mask, O Myrsilus ;

And now I counsel thee to do the same.
Unmask thee, masker ; be for once a man ;
And show thyself for what I know thou art,
A murderer ; now let thy face put on
The image of thine heart ! shift off the load
Of lies, and rise up evil as thou art !
Be what thou art, not seem what thou art not.
That change from twilight into blackest night
Will make thee grand by contrast ; let the fox
Turn on the dogs, and, though he be a villain,
That moment makes him equal with his foes.
Oh ! ape no more the march of majesty ;
Nor mock the voice of Law ; nor noble scorns
That burst from honest lips ; oh ! own thyself
A man the foe of men, a cheat, a traitor,
A public scourge for one who wields the strength,
That should subdue the strong, to crush the weak.
This bloody act is thine, as I shall show.
An ill which heap'd upon a thousand ills
Shall weigh thee down to Hell ! this ancient house
Is guiltless of the innocent blood that cries
To heaven and earth for vengeance ! O my friends,
'Tis not in birth, or customary honours,
Or in their opposites, that men may live
Stainless of sin ; the rich man slays the rich,
The poor the poor, and rich and poor each other.
Cast envy from your hearts, and judge this man,
Ye poor, as though he were a fellow-worker,
As once his kin were ; better were he now.

Ye rich, remember not that he hath wealth
And power, and honours ; we are here as men,
With hearts that tremble to the selfsame motions.
And, being of the people, not in vain,
Not without reason, do I raise my voice
For these, tho' they be nobles. O my friends ;
I think men know me for the friend of truth,
And justice ; even more a friend of those
Than to the people ; I may then be heard
Without suspicion ; this I testify,
That I too, by the help of Nemesis,
Was present with mine ears at this man's counsels.
I think ye can divine without more words,
My friends, who is the horseman that escaped.
First, to the city after the affray
That horseman came not ; but reenter'd then
His house upon the hill, whose terraced front
O'erhangs the hollow way, full well I know.
One day I rested in a hamlet nigh
Where the slain youth had dwelt, where now laments
His childless weeping mother all alone.
Late the same night the evil deed was done,
I was returning from an upland farm,
Whither, as is my wont, I had repair'd
On household matters, with my slave behind me.
It chanced that, being awearry of our walk,
We sat awhile to rest us by the way
On a stone seat hard by a spring, that gush'd
Under a marble arch within the wall.

Here, while we sat in darkness, tongues were heard
Of some in converse on the other side,
Where was a pillar'd terrace that o'erhung
The hollow way below ; and whether 'twas
The stillness of the hour, or echo flung
Back from the arch we knew not ; but the words,
Though whisper'd, fell distinctly on the sense
As though they were outspoken ; and one said :
' Here may we safely commune ; for, thank heaven,
Night hath no ears, and her ten thousand eyes
Pierce not the dark ; I trust not my own walls,
And fear my slaves be watching ; oh there's nought
Like the deep, still, and irresponsive air,
For drowning secrets, as the ocean drinks
The babbling rills. My purpose I have fix'd ;
They spoil'd my sport, and I am not myself,
If I do not avenge me.—Vengeance, vengeance
Is justice to myself ! I know them too ;
Altho' the dusk hour hid their faces from me :
I heard their names spoken to one another,
Alcæus, Citharus, Antimenidas,
Ev'n as they snatch'd the damsel from my arms.
And for the fisher's daughter they have won
They shall lose one still fairer ; I will seize
The bride of Citharus newly-wed, and charge him
With my own deed ; for if I am not foremost
In laying it to him, there may be peril
From chances unforeseen unto myself.
Such must not be ; meanwhile it shall be known

In all the land, Alcæus, and his brothers
 Have done this thing; doubt not I will have vengeance,
 O night, for unto thee alone we speak.'
 Then paused they in their work, and laugh'd aloud.
 And under shelter of it I pass'd off,
 And out of hearing; and again, it chanced,
 That in that interval came by the way
 Other three toward the city—in the gloom
 Their forms were scarce discern'd—but their own tongues
 Quickly made known they were the very men
 Whose names were utter'd by the whispering voice
 Upon the terrace overhead; they stood
 A space; one pluck'd the other by the robe,
 Gazing into the deep night without fear,
 And said, 'A strange night's work, O brother, this;
 A bridal turn'd into a funeral;
 A young bride rescued, and a bridegroom slain.
*Alcæus, we have left undone a deed
 Whose lack outweighs all good that we have done.
 The girl is safe, the boy will speak no more;
 The horseman is escaped, and we did ill
 To spare his accursed life!*'

Once more, my friends,
 Give ear; have patience while I tell ye all.
 The second day about the second hour
 After the sunset, ere the moon was up,
 About a furlong from the city gate,
 We met this woeful fisherman, and he said;
 'I have seen Myrsilus; he hath given me hope

Of justice, ay, of vengeance, which shall fall
Upon the murderers of my only child,
This very night ; he bade me to return
In twenty minutes, ere the moon was up ;
For he had need of me in some grave matter.
But I am weary, and my heart is faint.
I fear to take upon me his behest,
Lest my wits wander ; then I must go back
Quickly, and bear the answer ; I am worn
With grief, and haply may forget it all.’
‘ Be of good courage, O my friend,’ I said ;
‘ And give me now thy sheepskin, and thy cap,
And take mine, and this mantle ; and bide me here
Yet for a little while ; and whatsoever
He bids me do that will I do for thee.’
And so he gave me them. Then I withdrew ;
And in the shadows, ere the moon was up,
I gain’d the portal of the council-chamber,
And spoke the doorkeeper, and he went in.
I heard him say, ‘ A fisher stands without
Waiting thy bidding.’ Myrsilus arose,
And came with hurried step into the night ;
And look’d as one whose outer sense is blind,
Because the inner eye is turn’d on thoughts
So all-possessing, that the Actual
Is hid as in a dream. He look’d on me,
And knew me not ; the wandering of his mind
Help’d out the shadows of the portico
That made my aspect doubtful, as he spoke

With hurried breath, 'Take these,' and gave me then
 A packet, and a ring for token of him,
 To bear to a great palace past the walls
 And western gate; and, as he turned away,
 He waved his hand, and cried, 'Haste with all speed,
 I may not tarry with thee, and come back
 Quickly, and bear the answer to me here.'
 I hasten'd thro' the dark, and found a nook,
 Where hung a little lamp beside a shrine—
 For the moon was not yet—that gave me light
 To read the writing, and the answer to it;
 Which, friends and countrymen, I pray ye hear.
*'My friend, I send thee this by a blind man;
 For such a fool as reads not hath no eyes.
 Give heed unto it; for the game we play
 Is chancey as a die; and, if I fall,
 Thou, and the rest will follow, and our doom
 Is death, or banishment; so we must throw
 Another cast for life, and its delights.'*
*I tell thee this, that thou mayst hasten thee,
 Ere evil come, to gather all our friends,
 And meet the worst within the city walls!
 So to withstand the craft of Pittacus
 Betimes, who is, I fear me, hatching treason.
 Haply thou wilt say, 'Why not forgo
 Thy purpose?' Oh dream not that I will lose
 My vengeance, if I lose not throne and life.—
 For vengeance, and security are one—
 And it is dear to me, and shall not fail,*

*If your tongue, skill, and prowess fail me not.
So be thou present with a chosen band
Ere midnight, station'd on the garden side
Of the house of Caicus, beneath the wall ;
And at my signal rise and enter in ;
So they shall be taken, as hunted beasts,
None shall escape me ; if I crush the heads
O' the serpents, their long bodies will but writhe
And die ; and now the time, or all is lost.
So, when I blow a trumpet from within,
Know it to be my call, and scale the wall.'*
My friends, if I may make a little boast,
I have some little skill in counterfeit.
And from my boyhood I could mock with ease
The voices, and the gestures of my friends,
The written characters of other men,
Judging that thro' the selfsame outward forms
I could behold something of their within.
So, having read the tablet, on my own
I wrote in the known hand of Myrsilus,
Not that ye heard this moment, but my words
Which he shall hear—' *O Sir, I write in haste.
The isle is stirr'd because of our misdeed
Yest'reven ; fly, while there is room ; for know
That Pittacus hath gain'd the soldiery,
And blown into a flame the public wrath
By windy wording of a private grief.
Such aid as thou and all thy men might bring
Would be as nought ; but fly to the mainland,*

*And join the cohort that awaits thee there,
And seek a hiding place for me and thee.'*

Thus having writ, I hasten'd to the gate,
And knock'd ; and from the shadows stretch'd my hand,
Delivering up the writing to the slave,
Who bore it to his master ; who came forth
Suddenly, silently, and smote his brow,
And without speech or sign gave back the ring,
And shut the gate, and barr'd, and bolted it.
Then wrote I on my tablets a reply
As from my lord, and thus—' *Sire, thy behests
I have received together with the ring,
Which, with this answer, in a linen cloth
For better surety I have folded up.
Fear not that I will fail thee ; I counsel too,
For sake of caution, double not thy guard ;
Lest any should divine the deeper scheme
That masks behind this byplay—to seize on
The chiefs of the old faction hostile to us—
And so some might escape thee, and make off,
And bring together faithful followers ;
And 'mid the turmoil of the gathering war
The bold might dare to jostle thee aside,
And step into thy place, as thieves break through
On stormy nights ; for I myself will lead
An armed cohort ready for the war ;
And hold their palace on the garden side
While thou art nearing by the city way.'*
So I return'd unto the council-chamber,

And knock'd, and gave the writing to the guard ;
Who bore it in to Myrsilus, who rose
From among the Elders, and I heard him say,
'Who is the messenger?' The answer too,
'Tis a poor fisherman in sheepskin clad,
With russet cap torn something at the edge.'
'Tis well,' said Myrsilus, 'let him depart.'
The lamplight from the inner hall shot forth
Into the night, and show'd the woollen cloak,
And russet cap torn somewhat at the edge :
And then I hasted back into the night.
And now, in very proofs of all my words,
See here the leaf out of his tablets torn
Scrawl'd in his lawless character ; see here
His signet-ring which I have held till now.
And once again see here the dagger dropt
Out of the tyrant's hand that evil night,
Which the three brothers in their homeward way
Found glittering in the moonlight : these may serve
To bring home to a ruler and a judge
The bloody guilt he would adjudge to others ;
And leave him to be judged by all men here."
"And yet"—the brothers spoke with one consent
Advancing to the side of Pittacus—
"And yet these tokens are not proof to us
More than the surety of our hearts and eyes.
O tyrant, dost thou think we knew thee not,
Tho' muffled in thy mantle, and thy voice
Carefully hush'd? We saw that cruel eye

Burning with evil ; we were near at hand
Behind the young man as he strove against thee,
Yet not so near as to give aid to him.
And, had it not been for a coward's arm,
While rescuing his love he would have slain thee,
Maugre this dagger with its golden haft
Studded with gems." Then Pittacus again—
" We have borne patiently the guileful arts
Of this rare mummer ; but the web of lies,
That he hath ravell'd with a hellish craft
To net the innocent, hath snared himself,
A man whom foolish men have lifted up
By strength of folly o'er their naked heads,
That he might make them anvils for his hammer.
O tyrant, hear not me but thine own soul,
The sleepless witness that within thee burns
Like Ætna, ere thou diest, as thou must,
Judged righteously by thine own judgment, dealt
Unrighteously to guiltless men. I charge thee,
Tell one truth ere thou diest, that thou wert born
A liar, and a liar thou hast lived.
And then the sword that waves above thy head
Shall fall upon it ; but, ere that be done,
I bid thee in the name of all good men
To come down from the throne ; what doest thou there?"
" My will," he shouted ; and the marble walls
Flung back his last word from its shields and helms ;
And judgment fell upon him, not from man,
Nor sword, nor spear, but from the Gods themselves.

And with his eyes on fire he started up,
As tho' to combat with his single strength
The whole assembly ; and his arm was raised
As tho' to lighten on them ; then it fell,
The glaring eyes grew fix'd, his tongue was stay'd.
For lo ! from forth the shadows where it hid,
A sudden spectre clad in funeral white
Made one step forward ; and with lifted hand
And pointed finger shriek'd, " He is the man !"
Then strode into the middle of the hall,
Thro' men aghast with awe, they knew not why.
And Myrsilus, who deem'd that she was dead,
Thought that he saw her spirit come for him.
And, from his high place on the cloth of gold,
Prone, as a blinded Polypheme, he roll'd,
And from his mouth his lava-flood of life
Stream'd o'er the marble floor ; and his black locks
Flow'd o'er his nerveless arm, and mingled with it.
And that which had been rumour'd now befell.
For when she saw the justice of the Gods,
And the fall'n tyrant, like the tallest pine,
By lightning crazed, she for a moment turn'd
Her blue eyes upward, and with folded palms
Stood, as a peerless image, and then fell.
For mingling passions, like confused streams
Master'd her tender life, a too frail bark
Caught by a whirlpool, till it disappear'd.
So lay the guileless victim, side by side
With her tormentor ; he forthwith to pass

To his own place amid the evil ghosts ;
She to leave far behind the woeful earth,
Whence, lovely flower, she sprang, but to be dash'd
Earthward again by cruel winds, ere Time
Spread forth her leaves, to shed new life around.
And by the Elysian tuneful springs she lies,
In fadeless paradises of the blest,
With him she loved, not dead ; but gone before,
To lay for her beside those waters clear
Green plots alive with songs of happy birds,
And kiss'd with golden air of hopeful dawns,
And the sweet souls of ever-changing flowers.

IV

And now, behold a wonder ; for the men,
The armed ones who stood as adversaries,
While we were trembling for the dread to come,
Threw down their arms ; and stretch'd their hands to meet
Each other over the fall'n bulk of him,
Whom they had call'd their master ; and all eyes
Were turn'd on Pittacus, whose voice was heard
In gentle accents, like a summer wind,
That in its fury hath blown down a tower,
And now breathes softly through its crannied walls.
The man who from the first had never fail'd
In head or heart, bow'd o'er himself, and laid
His hands upon his eyes, and wept at last
A few hot tears like stormdrops ; when again

He raised his head, he saw before him there
The aged man, the father of the girl,
Bending above the pale face of the dead.
But he was tearless ; only now he mourn'd
That he was left behind ; the wither'd heart
Bore neither hopeful flower, nor bitter fruit ;
It lived, but now the sapless roots were dry.
“ Tell me,” said Pittacus, “ why didst thou say
That she was dead, thy daughter ? Even I
Heard the same rumour from the country folk ;”
“ And if I said my widow'd girl was dead,
'Twas that I thought so, as I saw her lie
With closed eyes, and with bloodless lips ; 'tis true
She lived again, she lived until this hour.
But liefer now I see her pass away
For ever, than remain a death in life,
Life without thought ; better no life at all.
And so, as I myself had spread the tale
'Tis certain Myrsilus believed her dead.”
“ In this thou mayst behold a wondrous thing,
Old man,” said Pittacus ; “ the murderer
Dreaming she was no more, did straightway fear
He saw her spirit come to take his life,
Who had ta'en hers ; Oh sure the Gods are wise !
Perchance his mind's eye may have conjured up
The ghost of her dead lover, till it grew
Visible to his sense ; and then he saw
Him walking by her side ; the world will say
The wrong that hath been done hath been avenged

By her on whom 'twas done ; the Gods are strong ;
And wrought the selfsame end by other means ;
The fear of that which might be brought about
The thing itself in its reality ! ”

V

All in the hall of arms was silence now
And darkness ; for the mournful guests were gone.
I stood, and listen'd ; for I heard a cry
Pass down the city-ways, and up the hills.
Voice bore onward voice, like wave on wave,
“ Myrsilus, oh, Myrsilus is dead ! ”
And, when the louder tongues had ceased, there came
From the dark inner depths of the dark town,
Farther and fainter, “ Myrsilus is dead ! ”
And, when all nearer sounds were hush'd, there flow'd
From moonless valleys, and from moonlit heights,
Like hidden flames that flash back from the clouds,
Or muffled thunders underneath the earth,
Or the thin whispers of far forest trees,
That cry of victory, “ Myrsilus is dead ! ”

THE ARMOURY

Warlike men are a city's towers.
The sheen of brazen armour
Lights all the spacious hall,
And warlike arms and trophies
Hang high on every wall.—ALCÆUS.

BUT war was hurtling in the peaceful air
That shone down on their wreaths, and bridal vests
And merrymakings ; and an eager host
Was gathering, and the foremost men made haste
To cleanse the rusty stains from helm, and shield
And cherish'd sword : and I too, shut within
My place of arms, a hall of marbles wrought
With skill of primest art, and hung around
High as the roof with trophies of old feuds
And wars in times of the primeval kings,
Made ready. If the world in which I am,
This glad new world of hope, and endless life,
This spirit-land, whither all mortals flow,
And ye must follow into higher state,
Had not begotten in me other strength,
And passions, other than all earthly moods,

How could I venture to remember now
What was my deepest shame ; my flight in war,
My back turn'd to the javelins of the foe,
My shield cast from me, and my broken sword ?
But, as a traveller in a mountain-land
Stands wondering at the Morn that hath not dawn'd
Yet in the valleys—hush'd the winds, serene
The sun-illumin'd summit—but at times
The towers of the dim city far below
Are half revealed to his down-gazing eye,
Its voices soften'd to a sound like sighs,
We doubt if such things were, or are but dreams.
And in the Past, the memory of our Prime,
Seen from the light of our immortal years,
Shines like a phantasm with an eerie light,
Rather than real ; and we see ourselves
In the fresh strength of youth, and wing'd with hopes ;
As though we look'd upon a pictured thing
With hues and forms imagined more than true.
And we can mock the passions that we felt,
And coldly handle burning fire ; and try
By sharpest instruments, and strictest measures
Our cherish'd purposes, and lawless wills,
Unruly as the lion of the wild
With sinews knit for onset. Else in vain
Should I essay to drag up into light
That prideful morn that went before my shame ;
When I was arming in my house, and thou
O Melanippus, who art with me here,

In answer to the farewell song I sent thee
Didst enter with a song ; and with thee came
Thy brothers ; and behind, the sunny head
Of Atthis, with young violets in her robe
That fill'd the place with sweetness. There I stood,
My choicest helm just set on my young locks,
That then were dark as Pluto's when he rose
Up thro' the flowers of Enna ; and was musing
In pleasant hesitation on those walls
Hung with my polish'd treasures, which I loved
To look on better than a golden lyre ;
And in my folly rather cared to hear
The iron echoes of the clashing arms
Tost from the roof and marbles of the hall,
Than the best music drawn from silver strings ;
Than voices lauding at a feast of friends ;
Than mine own songs borne to my idle ear
From tongues of strangers, and who knew me not.
I laugh to think of it ; how there I stood
In love with Death, with every pulse alive ;
As one may wait with folded arms, and watch
The hush'd and harmless lightnings broidering
The cloudy mantle of a summer night,
Ere yet the storm awakens. There were swords
Glancing back to me many a morning sun,
Or bloodred once again in evening glow,
That had been jagg'd in battle ; casques, and shields,
And aged corselets, whence the bloody rust
Of days of action, and of nights of brawl,

Was scour'd away, until as fresh as new
They shone, save dints and scrawls, that I had seen
So long, so lovingly, that I myself
Grew vain of those sad tokens, and half thought
That I had done the deeds. And that same thought
Was not all vanity, but, like a husk,
It hid the kernel of a valiant heart,
That has been tried since then. But I forget
That I am bound to tell of my dishonour ;
And this I do with unimpassion'd heart,
As one from a far sunlit mountaintop
May look down on the tempests, and may hear them.
Well—as the red leaves of a full-blown rose,
Hid in the white folds of a virgin's robe,
Caught by a brisk wind from the sea, flit off,
The laughter and the voices scatter'd all
My fond imaginations ; but they fell
Upon the sharp thorns of their cruel mirth.
“ Look here is our Achilles, who was wont
To make his voice a treble for our sakes
While singing with the girls ; and lo ! at last,
Tired of our pastimes, he would be a man,
And change at last the distaff to a spear ;
Come, let us help him to put on his arms.
O sweet, softspoken Pyrrha, who, beneath
Thy girlish garb, hast great Pelides' soul,
O tender-hearted Pyrrha, pine no more.¹
Put not thy faith in rhythms of love and peace,

¹ See note at end of volume.

Tho' many-footed, as a bridal dance
 Timing a soft epithalamial air ;
 But be content with two feet and a march."
 "Fail not to hang thy harp upon thy back ;"
 Another cried 'twixt laughter and disdain,
 "Like a true minstrel ; and so it may chance
 That in thy flight an arrow may be turn'd."
 "Ha ! ha !" said Atthis, "get that helmet shaped
 Into a drinking vessel ere thou part,
 And of thy stylus make a lance's head ;
 So it may drive into some tender heart
 Thy dreaming spirit, and so lull to sleep
 Thine adversary like a poppy-head."
 "What have we here ? a song as I'm alive—
 A merry drinking song—hark ! how it runs—

I

Wine, what art thou ? Wondrous source
 Of Good and Ill ; blessing, and curse ;
 Making Good better, Evil worse.

II

Wine, what art thou ? Magic spring
 Of consolations, meet to bring
 Rapturous bliss to clown or king.

III

Wine, what art thou ? Balm of pain ;
 Lethe of memories ; vernal rain
 Making dead hopes spring up again.

IV

What art thou? When his Fancy clings
Earthward, thou givest the Poet wings,
Till as a lark he soars and sings.

V

But now I put the harp away ;
I haste unto the bloody fray ;
Perchance I see no other day.

VI

But still 'tis better not to see
Evils to come which may not be ;
Wine, mighty wine shall make me free
From fears, and give me victory !

VII

Wine's the fiery spur of war ;
Rise up with the morning star,
And drink a draught, and so prepare,
And then arm, arm, and mock at care.

VIII

Wine by war is nobly won,
When a great deed hath been done
Drink in haste ; the foemen run ;
And then on, on, till set of sun !

IX

But ever after toil 'tis best,
With the dust upon thy crest,
With the blood upon thy vest,
Drink a cup—and then to rest.

And thou hast drunk at morn, and noon, and even :
Not in the sun, but in the blissful shade
Of the broad leaves of yon full-clustering vine,
That sheds soft twilight all the summer long
Upon the sidewalk of the garden there.
Thy great deeds ever follow'd on thy cups,
Which follow'd in their turn ; what were those deeds
But a new song in honour of the same ?”
And then they took three spears down from the wall,
And, leaning them together, at the top
They set a helmet ; and beneath it threw
A crimson mantle, till it look'd from far
Most high-heroical ; again they laugh'd ;
And round about it join'd their hands, and sang
A Pyrrhic measure ; and they bad it dance,
And flung ripe cherries at it, till it stream'd
With their sweet blood, and look'd like Ares' self,
Dreadful to see, impossible to die !
Well—“ Girls may flout us for we cannot fight them,”
At last I cried half anger'd ; for their scorn
Jarr'd both my self-love, and my sadder mood ;
There's nought so cruel as a merry maid ;
Solid with solid measures, force with force ;

Mad boys will ride a horse to death, and find
Diversion in destruction ; flay live eels ;
Stick gilded flies on pins ; and do to death
Strengths less than theirs ; but Mockery is a maid ;
Oh ! strengthless beauty loves to wound the spirit !
And in her wanton humours talks as though
Her heart were but a bubble fill'd with wind ;
Or thistlehead borne by the winds away ;
Or, as an infant with a bunch of flowers
Will take delight to shed them leaf by leaf,
Will pluck out pity in their thirst for power.
But when I turn'd to look on thee, my Sappho,
I saw thee bending o'er that song of mine ;
Thy lips were smiling, but thy soft deep eyes
Were dim with tears ; and with that sympathy
I felt me comforted, as tho' thy hand
Were laid upon my heart, and thou couldst hear
Its eddyng motions beating on each other,
Loves, prides, ambitions, hopes, regrets ; and most
That apprehension, like a frore wind, searching
The crevices between, that I perchance
Might no more see those whom I daily saw,
Never more hear the voices that I loved,
Thine more than all ; and if I knew that they,
Whose quenchless mirth was as a fire of thorns ;
Whose life, untried of any sorrow yet,
Fear'd Death no more, than do the waving flowers
The hands that gather them ; that they would mourn me,
Struck down in a far land ; Oh ! when I knew

That many a fair girl brave in her delight
Remembering me her lost and early friend,
Would shrink from that first sorrow, faint, unarm'd,
And weaker than the wounded heart of age,
The while it prest down all rebellious pride,
Left me as helpless as a weary child,
Whose angers burst in tears ; I follow'd her
Into the garden, and I yearned unto her ;
The light fell softly thro' the vines, and knit
Gold threads with her dark hair ; but she look'd back
Once only, and with a pale unearthly smile
She waded me from her, as though it were in vain
To weave sweet words, and play with pleasant dreams,
While the red cloud was looming o'er the land ;
And by to-morrow morn men should forget
All but the one great thought that they are men ;
I turn'd away, and sought the house with sighs.

THE BATTLE

Under the shadow of the sultry cloud
Stilly we slept on shore ; no tongue play'd truant ;
Only the chief deliver'd his brief word
In low clear tones, yet heard along the host
Sharp as the ring of armour, and our men
Show'd scarcely darker than the night behind
Built like a wall of blackness toward the East.
The windless seas fell heavy on the sands
With hollow thunder ; and at every burst

Flicker'd a flame that ran along the beach,
And made the blackness blacker than itself.
The armed bands, descending silently,
Grew vaster in the dark and calm, their crests,
Shuddering amid the gloom, still loftier seem'd,
Till in the eye of Fancy they became
The shadows of those heroes, that lay there,
Under the stones of Ilion hard by,
Come sadly forth to fight their fields again.
Far to the North the watchfires of the foe
Throbb'd with a ceaseless motion, like the glow
Of fiery foam thrown up against the shores
Of Phlegethon ; and on that sullen light
Flitted their dismal shapes like busy ghosts.
And momentary uproar, like the sound
Of surging fires that scald the strands of Hell,
Blew down upon us thro' the breathless calm.
And in the pauses of the tumbling surf
" Let each man take his rest as best he may,"
Said Pittacus—" the shore is tost in waves
Of sand, within whose hollows ye might lie
By daylight, screen'd from the too curious foe.
And now, or for concealment, or for sleep,
Ye need no other mantle than this night
Whose breath is burning." At that moment shot
A flash of soundless lightning, pointing down,
As with a fiery finger, to a mound
About a bowshot from me. In that glimpse
I knew I saw the great Pelides' tomb ;

And thither I betook me ; and within
The darker shadow of its bulk I lay
Fill'd with an awe, half terror, half delight,
At seeing thus my restless boyhood's dream
Bid fair to be accomplish'd. "I accept
The flaming omen, and will rest in hope,"
I cried—"Come to me, son of Tethys, come,
Breathe into me the vision of the past,
Till I awake ; and arm me in my sleep
With strength to do thy deeds !" But long I lay
Uppgazing at the starless dark, as though
To peep behind the veil, and mark the Fates
At work for me ; this was my first emprise,
And all before but prelude to this act ;
Chance tumult, dust of stormy accident ;
When oftentimes those, who had been friends a day,
Unriveted their love ; and friendships, sever'd
Over a cup of wine, again embraced
Across another. This was work for men.
Nations were met, as mountains earthquake-shaken,
That move to one another ; this still night,
That roof'd with thunder the heroic land,
Morn with fierce wings would cleave, a bird of prey,
And sweep with fatal talons. Then there rose
Home thoughts of early days, and swiftly pass'd
O'er that dark ground of dreadful phantasies ;
Sweet memories, bending like immortal spirits
Their mournful eyes upon me, and turning back
Their radiant foreheads. Ah ! we never know

How lovely is the lowly tinkling flow
Of peaceful moments, with their sunny sparks,
Their eddies, and their bubbles brightly broken,
Their little shallow whirlpools, which betray,
Like the clear shells, and tiny gemlike stones,
Humble and pure affections underneath ;
Till tempest swings the sudden torrent down
That clouds their beauty. And all my life at once
Mysteriously, as to a drowning man
Come back the thoughts of all that he hath been,
Upon the orb'd dark as on a shield
Was scroll'd. My mother's face bent over me,
When Time threw back for me the gates of Life,
And the dark sisters in my little hand
Laid one more thread of the great Mystery ;
My father when he led me first to school,
And left me, with dim eyes, and a faint heart,
To struggle with strange souls ; that wise old man
Who fed my spirit. Then came moonlit dance,
And noonday feast beneath cool upland trees ;
The loving boy still holds the loving hand
Of the fond grandsire, or the fonder sire,
His manly head erect still dark with youth.
Seldom he thinks, or, when indeed he thinks,
He mocks himself, poor fool, and scorns his years,
Those years joy-wing'd, yet slower than his pride,
That takes vain leaps to reach the height of man,
And falls back striving—sighing still to strive—
But arming daily. Then that glorious morn,

When like the Sun's fierce horses, Pyrous,
Phlegon, and Æthon, and Eous, pulsing
With golden hoofs, and outspread mighty vans,
That beat the Orient into fiery drift,
My firstborn Fancies sprang up from the earth
Into a world of wonder ; and I ran
Along the shore, delighting in my strength,
The wild wind singing in my hair, my voice
Rising above the waters. And that hour
More memorable, when wing'd Eros took
The reins of the wild chariot of my thoughts,
And made the untamed lions feel his hand
And keep harmonious paces ; from his wings
Scattering roseplumes o'er waste, and dusty way,
And making the dun shadows as we pass'd
Radiant with his own light. Again that eve,
When, hasting from a bridal in the hills,
And singing as I rode into the gate,
I saw Death with his finger on his lips
Before my father's chamber ; and the threne
Unutterable, as my mother lay
Prone on the bed, her lamentable face
Prest 'neath her long loose hair upon her hands,
And the dread surety of mortality,
Erewhile beheld beside the stranger's hearth,
Like sculptur'd marble on a banquet table,
Unreal image, look'd on and forgot,
Now rose upon me, like a wintry dawn,
That, thro' one cloven cloud, shows far behind

The drear and fathomless Infinity.
Lastly, ascending slowly from beneath
The dust of desolations, and of tombs,
Ambition, like an armed King, whose frown
Pleasure, and Love, and Fancy must obey,
And fight for him, until his throne be piled
Above their wither'd wreaths, and ruin'd shrines,
Seized with his iron gauntlet on my heart.

II

At last I sank into unquiet sleep.
Again that silent flash, that had reveal'd
The plain at even, shot across mine eyes.
But the light waned not ; and behold, outspread
All that heroic region as beneath
A paler sun. Methought the fallen stones
Of Ilion rose up in gigantic shapes,
Immeasurable towers, and walls that sloped
Like mountainsides—each stone a mighty cube
Of adamant, huge as the granite blocks
From their high peaks by earthquake roll'd beneath
A cataract, dashing it to dust of dew,
Then sundering it in streams. And thro' great gates,
Like Alpine Valleys over-arch'd with cloud,
Pour'd forth the sons of Priam—giants now
Huge as their own renown—and their first tread
Shook all the earth to Ida ; plumes went up
Like altar smoke, shields, and colossal arms,
That might have reddened in Ætnæan fires,

And under Cyclopean hammers rung,
Wrought for the Gods of that primeval day
Titanic, when unearthly war was waged.
I heard the roaring of their chariotwheels
Make echoes, as they roll'd into the waste,
Like doubling thunders shot from hill to hill,
Or torrents, or great winds from Gargarus.
The battlements throng'd thick with Dardan sons,
And longrobed daughters, tall as Pallas, pale
As marble Sorrow, or ghosts on Stygian shore,
With streaming hair, and arms raised up to Heaven.
And from the vast and column'd fanes behind,
That thro' great clouds o'erhanging skyward clomb,
Wreathed with dim scrolls, and wonderful, there soar'd
Unutterable, from sanctuary and shrine,
Far inwards, awful pathos, and divine
Accents of golden hymn, and longdrawn plaint !
Then, as in storm-tost seas a hanging cloud
Darkens the onward waters, while the near
Soar with their clashing surges, angry-bright
Against that gloomy rim ; the gleaming piles
Of that great city in quick night were drown'd ;
While nigher flow'd the spectral tumult, fired
With troubled aspects of Achaian chiefs,
And brazen breasts and plumes, and towering arms,
Poising a thousand javelins, that went forth
Over the dark necks of the madden'd steeds,
Swift as the foamflakes shorn from curling seas
Fly kindling in the sun. Unnumber'd shields,

Delved with sharp points, sent lightnings off, and shrill'd
With screaming iron ; and beneath their wheels
Fall'n giants writhed, from whose upturned eyes,
Afire with agony and with hate, recoiled
The scared horses, and fled faster on,
Whirring the dust like smoke from lava floods
Into the trembling ether, in a cloud
That hid the farther battle, and then show'd
Thro' dreadful rifts torn open by the wind
Long aisles of bloody ruin. And the uproar
Hush'd for a moment ; other voices roll'd
Thro' winding ways of that great world of Death,
Like echoes of the nearer, dying off
In dim remoteness ; like the endless wail
Of sunken seas borne o'er a wilderness.
Then once again the cloudy curtain rose
From off the leaguer'd city ; and the war,
Like the lash'd waters huddled by the wind
Into a cavern's mouth, with roaring sound
Burst thro' the open gates ; and I leapt up
And follow'd with the hindmost, hurried on
By strong fatality, and join'd my cry
Unto the universal voice of Doom
Eddying around the piled Pergamus ;
“ Down with her, down with her unto the ground ! ”
Whereat its bases and its topmost towers
And holy places shuddered. Far within
The foremost arm'd avengers I beheld
Thronging the battlements ; their shields and plumes

Mingling and reddening in the frequent flare
Of torches, tossing to and fro, that show'd
Their bloody blades illumined from below,
As by an angry sunset. Fast and far
We thunder'd on thro' dark and winding ways,
Shadow'd by steepy wall, and barred gate,
Made sudden visible by tongues of flame
That struck aloft from far up pinnacles
To heaven, and shed ensanguin'd light below
Like lava-streams ; column and architrave
Reel'd earthward, leaving all the space within
Swept, like vast furnaces, with howling flame
And blinding light ! But what do I behold ?
At once the onward tide of ruin ebb'd
As from a greater ruin, and a hush
Held all their panting hearts as 'twere abash'd
With sudden awe ; you might have heard them throb
In that tremendous silence. Then I heard
The wail of women's voices from afar,
Wild lamentation, as when hope is past
For ever and for ever : pity-smote
And passionate with grief, I made my way,
Right thro' the hosts of those gigantic men,
As guided by a spirit, and I look'd—
Thro' shafts of blacken'd marble, thro' long aisles
Of regal architecture, which the smoke
Of gilded rafters, smouldering in the glow
Of half-extinguish'd embers, curl'd about,
And floated under the carved roof, and frown'd

Away the mystery of dim halls beyond
That stretch'd away for ever—on a sight
That might have made the blessed Gods themselves
Weep over mortal sorrow, and repent.
There in his ancient chambers, stood the King,
Tall, and majestic as a God himself,
Sire of a race of giants, Priamus,
Awful with many winters ! his old arms
Lifted against the dazzling sword : “ Hold ! hold ! ”
I shriek'd : but, faint as whispers, that wild cry
Out of my sickly heart, poor dwarf of Time,
Reach'd not the unrelenting ears of Gods,
And godlike men. Suddenly I awoke.

III

Those dread dream-thoughts were scatter'd by the noise
Of the Etesian, that came down at morn,
And round the tomb blew with a wailing voice
That broke my rest ; and thro' the serried clouds
Burst, swiftly driving them, like routed horse
With weltering manes, across the stars ; and soon
Along the East lay, like another sea
Of stilly flame, the quickening dawn ; and round
The slumbering host fast on the signals flew.
And fast the warriors, arming in the dusk,
Prepared for onset, ere the growing light
Should show their motions. To the chariots some
Yoked the fresh steeds, while yet they champ'd the grain

Against the curb ; some eyed their javelin points,
Or drew their hands across the darkling blade
With knitted brows ; then into line they fell ;
And, like some monstrous serpent deadly still,
Under the shadow of the city wall,
The faint light shimmering from its linked scales,
They wound into the champaign silently.
Between the barred gates, and hostile camp
Nearer the ships held Citharus a reserve
Of chosen men ; and Antimenidas
Struck further down into the reedy plain,
With aim to turn the foe ; but soon rejoin'd.
For all the plain to northward was astir
With the advancing foe, in haste to storm
The gates ; and their dark helms, and bristling arms
Nodded, like pinewood, in the wind of morn,
And the clear amber onward. On they came
In silence, till the first ray of the sun
Smote on the brazen breastplates of our men,
And made the bucklers glare like angry eyes.
And then a shout arose—as when the waves,
Snarling along a shingly strand, are held
Upon a sudden gust—answer'd at once
By ours ; then first they saw us ; then unroll'd
Their standards altogether, radiant,
The rippling crimson fleckt with sparks of light,
The tall staves tipt with stars. The hour was come !
I cannot say I did not fear ; for Youth—
Like a wild horse that drives with headlong speed

Up to the sheer edge of a precipice,
And starts back with blown mane, and dazed eye,
At sight of the abhorred gulph, and sound
Of torrents roaring—hung back loth, yet lured
To sound the measureless Futurity,
Where Life and Death, like winged Giants, lockt
In writhen strife with struggles lightning-swift,
Fell thro' the grey abysm of the Unknown
Further than thought can follow : tho' my heart
Within my breast beat solemn pulses, mighty
As thunder-winged shakings underground.
Strong will, proud purpose, and fullarm'd resolve
Press'd down its throbs, like the adamantine hills,
With all-subduing strength ; and fear itself—
Like to the wild wave rocking in the storm,
Glittering with sunbows and with sunny stars—
Crested and plumed with glorious phantasies
Forwent itself, and changed into delight.

IV

Then first I knew Death seen is not so drear
As Death foreseen ; Death's self is not so dread
As Death imagined : tho' the air was thick
With whirling dust ; tho', for the shrieks and cries
Around me, I could scarce hear my own voice.
The aspect of the living battle-plain
Was a fair picture by the side of that
Seen in my dream, the vision by the tomb.

The flash of swords, the glancing of the spears
Like summer lightnings glorious to behold ;
The roar of chariotwheels, the neigh of steeds
Beating the earth, and mingling with the dust
Their flying manes ; the surging to and fro
Of mighty hosts full soon became to me,
The thousand thunders a weird harmony,
The many motions as an awful dance !
So that my soul was clothed with wings, my heart
Sang as in triumph. Many fell around,
Both friends and foes : and now with sword in hand
And waving o'er my head, I with my band
In hot pursuit of a retreating troop
Held onward, and mine arm was raised to strike
One close before me ; when the dusty cloud
Scatter'd before a sudden gust, and then
I saw another sight, and held my hand.
Behold, as in an amphitheatre,
The two opposing armies stood and gazed
Upon each other, resting on their shields,
While the two chiefs, two paces in advance,
Eyed one another, one the sturdy strength
Of Pittacus, the other the tall form
And bulk of Phrynon, mightiest of his men.
I heard a trumpet sound ; a herald strode
Into the middle space between the lines ;
And with a great voice he proclaim'd—" The chiefs
On either side are of one mind, to hold
Back their arm'd hosts, and rest upon their arms

And pause, and hold a parley." Then stood forth
Our Lesbian leader, not a man of mark
For stature, or for graces ; but they knew,
Who met him face to face, and saw the light
In his deep eyes, that he was one who rules
By will and wit, more than by hand and sword :
And they who look'd upon his frame might see
That temperance and toil, self-sought, had wrought
A panoply of sinewy might, enough
To tame a wild beast with a single blow,
Or stretch an unskill'd giant on the earth.
Then forward stood the Lesbian chief and sage.
There was a sudden silence, and he said—
"Methinks, O Phrynon, that enough is done
To save the honour of two famous realms,
Two valiant races ; and the earth is red
With blood of many ; wherefore should we sow
More mortal seed to grow immortal hate ?
When, were we wise, the blood of two, or one,
Of me, or thee, in single strife, might serve,
To set the seal of Victory on the side
Of those whose champion is the better man,
Were all assembled here of the same mind.
Shall we not then, O Phrynon, spare the waste
Of thousands, and ourselves play out the game ?
What boots it to pursue the bloody sport
With equal forces match'd against each other ?
Hear me, and I will tell thee what befell
Two noble armies striving long ago

In a far land ; and claiming each the right ;
And yet that right was but a little thing.
They met each other, in their numbers like,
And in their prowess ; all day long they strove
Till set of sun ; and on the morrow morn
Rose fiercer still and fewer ; thus ten days
They struggled, each host vanishing away,
Like cross beams charring o'er the selfsame fire ;
Striving all day until the set of sun
Still fiercer and still fewer ; till at last
On the tenth day but the two chiefs were left,
Glaring, two hungry lions, on each other.
And then they slew each other, and their bones
Whiten'd the plain with those of half that host ;
And none were spared to claim the victory !
Why should we tarry, till the end of war
Leaves us, nor lookers on, nor arbiters ?
And then, if thou or I were slain, not both,
The victor, who survives, must crown himself,
And bear home the sad tidings that of all
The brave, he only is escaped ; wouldst thou
Do this, and stand before thy countrymen,
Whose love, like a vain woman's, turns to hate,
Veering with fortune ? Would I cross the strait
With my one life, when all the rest are dead,
Or fled away, not to be found again ?
Not rather hang a weight upon my neck,
And drown in the deep sea than front the shame ?”
Then answer'd Phrynon with a curt disdain,

Heedless of all the words that he had heard :
“ I thought to see one worthier of my arm.
What now I see is like what I have heard.
Art thou their captain? Think thyself in luck
That I forbear to bind thee on the spot,
And tie thee to my tent-stakes ; I have heard
Thou art a man of parchments, not of arms ;
Wise, as they say, in knowledge ; wiser still
In thrifty tricks, and economic arts ;
And skill'd to beat an obolus so thin
Thou canst see through it ev'n into next week ;
And make a flask of wine, or cruse of oil, '
Outlast the weary vinedresser's, who sleeps
At sunset, and awakes before the dawn.
I pledge not mine own friends, if I be slain,
Not to avenge me ; let them do their will.
But if thou fallest, what must surely be,
I promise thee, my men shall fall on thine,
And hack them hip and thigh unto their ships.
Ha ! ha ! and thou wouldst be a swordsman too !
But art thou come to mock me, at thy peril,
That thou art come unarm'd ? or is he mad, ”
Mutter'd huge Phrynon, “ that he meets me thus ?
Or doth he dream the Gods, who made him wise,
Will help their chosen in a strait like this,
Which calls for that they gave him, and not laugh,
If now, to honour them, in simple faith
He calls upon them for a miracle ?
Will Pallas float down on a cloud for him,

As though he were great Diomedes, or
The tall Achilles?" Then he shouted "Man,
Where is thy sword, where are thine arms, and where
Thy wisdom? Will that blunt my weapon's point
Or sheathe its edge?" He shouted and he laugh'd.
Whereto the sturdy Lesbian Chief replied—
"I saw two dogs this morning yelping strife,
A big one and a small; and, while the one
Stood idly barking o'er the other's head,
The small shot under and bit at his tail;
And as the big one bow'd his head at once,
The small rush'd on and pinn'd it to the earth.
I saw two men in Mitylene meet,
A tall one and a short; and while the one
Stood loudly railing o'er the other's head,
The other look'd up underneath his face
Wagging a long forefinger at his nose.
And, while the tall man watch'd this act alone,
The short man tripp'd his heels with sudden foot,
And laid his adversary on the earth.
I am the small man and the little dog,
And therefore charge thee, look unto thyself,
Meanwhile I do defy thee, and thy bark."
"Then die, thou fool," the Athenian shouted—"die"—
And rush'd upon him like a falling tower.
But the hard point of the down-lightening blade
Delved with such dint upon the brazen boss
Of the Lesbian's buckler, that it harshly rang,
And then was shiver'd into fragments small,

That glitter'd in the sunlight, as they fell,
Like shooting stars. The Lesbian laugh'd—" 'Tis well;
I find thy bark is better than thy bite ;
Come, take another sword ;" and, while he turn'd
To his own men, the Lesbian, quick as thought,
Swung o'er his arms what seem'd a fisher's net
Of closely woven cords, and then at once
With forward motion, cast it o'er his foe,
And with a giant's strength drew fast the toils
Till head and breast and sword-arm caught within
Were palsied, and the fish, a man, was caught.
And then he said—" O Phrynon, I have dealt
Not as a traitor with thee ; thou art taken
Arm'd by an unarm'd man ; and now I bid
My old, familiar weapon, fear'd of fish,
To do its second duty and its best."
Then, while he tighten'd with one hand the cords,
Running back swiftly, with the other he drave
The sharp points of the trident thorough all,
Thro' net, and shield and armour of his foe
Right to his heart ; and with a shriek he fell !
Then rose a shout from all the Lesbian side,
As when a thousand echoes, rolling round
A rocky valley, double and redouble,
Till they faint far away along the wind :
Whereat the Athenian cohorts with a cry
Bursting, like flame from out a smouldering fire,
Raised sword and shield, and swift as eagles wing'd
To vengeance for their rifled nests, they swoop'd

Down on us ; pride, the wounded giant, rose
To tenfold stature, like a cloudy peak
Giving forth lightnings : lance, and javelin flew
A sudden hailstorm shattering crested helm,
Cuirass, and shield. Now came my turn to feel
The pain and shame that I had dealt that day
To others ; now my shield was on my back,
And not my harp ; but not for long to me
'Twas left to flee from death o'er fallen lives,
And stumble thro' the dying, whose dull eyes
Turn'd on me their last desolate regard ;
Whose outstretch'd arms a moment seem'd to crave
Aid of the Gods, then fell, like blasted boughs,
Heavily to the earth ; while with parch'd lips
Others were writhing, as tho' but one draught
Of water, even if it dash'd their throats
From the salt sea, whose freshness they could hear
And breathe from far, were heaven, altho' they paid
For it that moment the last hope of life.
So from the fall of one the many rose
And Victory crown'd the vanquish'd : but I heard
The voice of Pittacus,—whose wise essay,
Jealous of him, and eager for her own
Pallas Athena had discomfited ;
Or he had saved all that were lost, and won
A peaceful victory—tho' worsted, calm,
And watchful ; gathering up the flying bands,
And, like a swift and cunning shepherd's dog,
Compassing front and flank and rear, as though

He multiplied his presence as he will'd.
Not long 'twas free for me to fly in fear
From vengeance ; for a hot pursuing foe
Striding upon my failing footsteps drave
His javelin thro' my shield, and pierced my side.
To aid my flight I flung away my shield ;
And then I fell, and for a time I lost
Memory of all ; and, when I woke, behold
The plain was all forsaken but by them
Who never more should waken, and by them
Whose cries and curses beat off the dark wings
Of hovering vultures, and the beasts of prey,
Until they ceased for ever. I rose ; I fled
Another way than Pittacus had taken.
Meanwhile, from the deep furnace of the West
Fold upon fold of onward tempest roll'd,
Hurricane-swift, its thunder-raiment splash'd
With sanguine crimsons, like the endless smoke
Of burning worlds ; far off along the plain
The wind-borne dust-wreaths smit with the red light
Waved like to flames ; lower and lower sank
The dying sun ; the dust-wreaths seem'd to change
Into grey mist ; still over it I saw
The banners flying, and I heard the shouts
Of the onward foe triumphant, and beheld
Their spears and lances drive into the mist
Like drowning stars. I stood upon the shore ;
And there a weary fisher by his bark
Lay slumbering, while his nets dried in the sun,

Mindless of all the uproar of the fray,
The dust, and clang, and clamour ; he had pass'd
That very morning from his Lesbian home
To mark the issue of the fight, and first
Bear back the tidings, hoping for the best.
Just as I stepp'd into the boat I saw,
Far up above me, where the temple rose
Of Hera, over the Sigeian wall,
Now burning in the last glare of the sun,
The glittering sheen, and heard the clash of arms.
And then a shout came down from near the shrine ;
A something flash'd a light into mine eyes ;
And then I knew, that, with the spoil of war,
There was hung up the shield that I had lost.

PITTACUS

On either hand the rolling waters throng,
We thro' the midst are darkly borne along.—ALCÆUS.

I

I SAW sad eve close on the strife of men
With elemental tumult ; from the deep
Swoln clouds drove up, and winds that anger'd it ;
While the sick moon anon with troubled face
Look'd thro' the rifts of tempest, and show'd, pale
As spectres, the gaunt headlands, and tall cliffs ;
And me unto myself, bedimm'd with dust,
My hands and armour red with bloody smear.
My boatman from the shadow of a rock
With clasped hands turn'd piteously, as though
'Twere vain to seek more knowledge of those woes
My fatal aspect utter'd ; but I answer'd
Faintly : “ Lost ! lost ! ” unto that dumb regard ;
“ But I must fly ; and not from death alone,
Which now were slumber to me, but those ills
Sharper than death itself, from chains of shame !

Quick ! let us clear the strait thro' cloud of night.
The darkness, though it snare us unto doom
Will save us from the scorn of Pittacus !
From shouts of the infuriate citizens,
And the barb'd arrow of my stricken pride,
Tormenting me in sight of vengeful eyes
Worse than the foeman's iron ! away ! away !"
" Alas !" he cried—" hast thou escaped alone ?
Of all that valiant host sublime with hopes,
Who came with trumpets blowing from the hills
This morn, their crests and corselets flinging off
The sunrise, mix'd with songs ?" " O man," I cried ;
" Like a broad blazon'd banner whirlwind-rent
Our host is scatter'd, each man where he best
May find a fearful shelter :"
" Woe is me !"
He cried—" I hoped for other close than that
To this long day of evils ; all the hours
From morn to noon, from noon to eve, I sat
Listening the tumult, as it wax'd and waned.
The clangours and the uproar of the fight
Sway'd to and fro, and even so my heart
Arose and fell. Sometimes I moved, in act
To join the fray at once, and mark the worst ;
For it is better to be borne along
The flood and ebb of war, and thus forget
In acting what is dread, than burn and freeze
With our own fancies." " Bind this arm, I pray thee ;
And give me from thy flask a draught of wine,
That I may bear up till we reach the shore,

That darkles over yonder, like a grave
That shall close o'er me soon." No sooner done
Than he unmoor'd the little bark, and raised
The sail that flapp'd amid the deepening gloom
Ev'n like an ill bird's wing. Then down I sank
In mute despair ; the mountains in the dark
Frown'd nearer on us, and seem'd with threatening brows
To overshadow us, and stretch their arms
To feel for us ; yet not in love, methought,
But angry hatred to pursue my shame.
And here and there the red fires from afar
Of signal torches fleeing thro' the hills
To wing the terror onward, like the eyes
Of baffled vengeance, glared on me ; and soon
The wind, that still had borne us o'er the deep
And starless seas,—no light except the pale
And ghostly glimmer of the moon that show'd
The swelling flood, that clomb upon our bow,
And lighten'd on the black curve of each wave
Grinning, as tho' the yet unsated foe
Rush'd on before us, and turn'd back upon us,
Plumes waving, and a thousand swords upraised—
Changed swift as thought, and blew the drenched sheet
Back on the mast ; the vessel from its course
Drifted to leeward, and sea meeting sea
Burst o'er our heads in darkness ! " Ah ! " I cried,
" Now shall Ambition perish, not in light
Of Day, nor in the eyes of wondering foes,
His broken brand waved o'er his head thrown back,

The crimson life-stream from his broken heart
Burning in the full sunlight, but alone
In darkness and despair ! Give me thy sword,"
I cried, "that I may end with one more pang
And cheat the hungry seadogs of my life ;"
But in that very moment shot the thought
Across my soul,—so wondrous are the Gods,—
Of the sweet aspect of a little child,
And its dear mother lifting him to me
For blessing ere I parted ; 'twas my own
Fond parent lifting little Citharus up
To kiss me ere I ran away to school.
I turn'd back and he stretch'd his hand to me.
And since that morn I never could forget
The mute farewell, the little loving hand
That yearn'd to clasp me. And so I forgot
The peril, and the midnight ; and that picture,
Framed in a rosebough, arching overhead—
Ev'n as the serpents in the Gorgon's hair
Freeze into horror—with its beauty thaw'd
Despair, and iron purpose into nought.
The moon shone out again, and show'd me all
The shadows underneath the precipices
Alive with breakers, that shot up their sides
Serpents of foam, and glanced forth angry tongues,
And fell back howling, or were dash'd to dust
On marble crags beneath. Near, nearer still,
The rudder helpless, and the canvas torn,
Shoreward we drave—a leaf before the storm—

Like my soul lash'd by furies ; high o'erhead
A temple of Poseidon, vast and dark,
Arose. I cried, "O king of seas, and storms !
I pray not for myself, but them, whose lives
Are knit with mine, and dearer than my own ;
Save me for them, whose souls are pure of ill."
And, in the bursting moonlight, I beheld
The tall dark columns and the frontal huge
Move with a solemn motion, as the clouds
Roll'd up with adverse motion : "If we clear
That little cape, there is a bay beyond,
And a smooth coast ; but, if we clear it not,
This night will have no other morn for us ;
And great Poseidon will have answer'd us,
Ere thou hast time to pray again ; and now
We must be calm, and wait for him to step
'Twi'x Life and Death." Ev'n as he spoke, a wave,
Mighty and black, bore upwards on its slope
Our little bark, as 'twere with greater fall
To fling us down upon the granite teeth
And end us with a moment ; but we whirl'd
Past the great rocks, and thunders on the lee ;
And, as we swept by on the swirling sea,
We heard from caves, that ran beneath the steep,
Hoarse angry voices, as the hungry cries
Of disappointed dragons, but in vain.
Our hearts beat freely as we backward gazed
On that great danger fled ; for now the might
Of the wild waters, as with fury lash'd

Not to have rent us on the cruel crags,
With dying vengeance whelm'd and beat us down
Upon the shallows ; in a moment more
The surf flew over the dismasted bark,
And with it we were swept into the coil
Of hissing gulphs of foam ; and in mine ears
The roar of thunder drown'd my drowning cry,
As once it rose into the night, above
The winds and waves ; then silence and the gloom
Of death ; for, wearied with my wounded arm,
'Twere vain to strive against the beating seas,
And thought and feeling fled me as I lay.
How long I linger'd in that death-like trance
I know not ; thro' my reawakening soul
Came murmurs of low voices, as they bore me
Up by a narrow way between the rocks
Slowly and softly, through a garden-gate.
And soon the flare of torches to and fro
Flicker'd across my sight ; familiar sounds
Sank soothly in mine ears ; the sights and sounds
Came o'er me, as half-consciously I lay,
Like the inconstant images in dream
Part sad, part sweet ; and mixed with real dreams,
That fill'd the intervals 'twixt sense and sense,
Like the strange-fashion'd clouds that flew across
The moonlight. Sometimes on a mountain crest
I stood—a trumpet in my hand—and blew
A blast so loud, the echoes from beyond
The seas made answer to me ; and unnumber'd,

Upturn'd eyes look'd on me from a vale
Far down, so far, I scarce could hear the glad
Acclaim of millions, tho', methought, their shouts
So stirr'd the air above, it waved my plume.
Again I rode in anger, and in fear,
Through a dark pass, whose perpendicular walls
Reach'd to the clouds; and o'er it hurried smoke
And flame with silent swiftmess, while the sides
Of adamant, and adamantine floor
Throbb'd to the roof, and gave back iron answers
As we rode on with winged speed, and eyes
That pierced the darkness onward; and behind
With earthquake tread avenging giants strode
Swiftly. Before me yawn'd sheer precipice;
And the wild ocean, lit by lightnings, roar'd
Beneath me; and I leapt with helm, and arms,
And drawn sword on my madden'd horse, down, down
Into—green gardens, whose ambrosial breath
Yielded oblivious peace unto my heart,
And bliss to every sense. Methought I saw
The vaulted vineshade flutter overhead,
Shot with the morning sungold; and the stems
Of laden rosebriers wreathing with the vine
Lithe arms, and lush large clusters with the dark
Ripe bunches of the grape; and flittering sound
Of leaves innumerable in the wind
Whisper'd tranquillity and peace; and long,
Long turfwalks, where the leafy shadows soft
Gambol'd thro' distance endless to the eye,

Went right and left, and vanish'd in a haze
Of pale, gold-green. And by me summer bees
Swept with a pleasant moaning ; and all birds
Of sweet pipe and gay plume around me glanced ;
And with the motion of their whirring wings
Made the air sparkle, as with handfuls thrown
Of many-colour'd gems ; and in mine ears
Still murmur'd the seawaters, soften'd down
To a low musical monotony,
And gave the lovely solitude a soul.
Was this the Elysian life ? Once more I woke
Into half-consciousness ; what did I see ?
Ah ! tender eyes were bending over me,
And tender hands were clasping mine ; I saw
The chamber, lighted by a carven lamp
Of silver, breathing twilight, as I lay
Upon deep cushions overlaid with furs,
Whence I could see across the pillar'd hall
Into the glooms beyond ; and whisper'd words
Floated from other chambers. As my sight
Grew stronger, I could pierce beneath the shades
Of green boughs, surging softly in the wind
That bluster'd thro' the garden ; and I saw
The helms and corselets of some armed men
Sheening against the lamplight from within.
Some lay upon the turf, and others lean'd
Upon their shields in silence ; then again
I sank into deep sleep, that sight nor sound
Could overcome for many peaceful hours.

Long, long I lay in that undreaming swoon,
Till waken'd by two voices ; both I knew.
'Twas Sappho's self spoke first ; and then I saw
That they had brought me to her seaward home,
Up from the rocks and breakers on the shore ;
That she had tended me ; and then I sigh'd,
And would have lapsed into sweet calm again,
But for that other voice that answer'd her.

II

“ He sleeps the sleep of weariness,” she said,
In a low sad voice, but such as I could hear ;
For certain words might waken up the drowse
Of dying men ; and tho' mine eyes were closed
Mine ears could tell which was the buzzing fly
That plagued me most. And soon she spoke of that
Which rouses men to kill, or to be kill'd,
The love of those we love for other men ;
And I lay there too weak to be avenged !
And yet on whom ? She whisper'd to one by
In the cool shadows of a chamber near ;
And well I knew that voice that answer'd her ;
“ I know the son of Caicus,” he said ;
“ His restless loves, his constant love of change ;
His pride of blood, and praise of those, who place
Ambition rather in the hope to stand
By strength among the foremost, than to win
The hearts of men by hearty truth ; his eye,

That looks upon the purple folds of power
More than the thing they clothe, adores the show,
As children wonder at a throbbing star
And yearn to clutch it ; though he knows it not,
And would be shamed to own it to himself :
Yet wisdom he lacks not, but will to do.
I know him, and have known, and this I know.
The ruler of a state may quicker quench
A midday blaze of public wrath, than slake
The creeping fires of midnight ; better bear
The reeling step of drunken rage than feel
The soundless foot of envy ; a vain man,
Having well leapt into the gilded chair,
Might all as well have throned his vacant robes,
Himself no better than an empty show
In that particular seat ” : he paused, then said ;
“ Remember how in early youth he strove
Against me and my side, when the clear voice
Of Lesbos spoke for me in her sage men
And simple livers ; and when I resolved
To bend my countrymen to other aims
Than flaunting shows, and love of that vain life
That seeks to drown in revelry and wine,
And the hot whirl of everlasting change,
The sense of something calling from within,
‘ Man, thou must live, and wake by day, and dream
By night ; but if life be but waking dreams,
Such chances may o’ertake thee as befall
Blind eyes, and heedless hearts ; some enemy

Cruel and cold, some hunter of his kind
May bind thee, and thy reawaken'd strength
May never more cast off the tyrant's hand.'
The pleasure-loving people is a slave
That woos the chain, and wears it in his soul
Ere he hath felt its links upon his arm !
Had not their old men, and the countryfolk,
Show'd me their hearts in natural sympathy ?
Whose artless customs were akin to mine,
Who in my proper person taught them all
The wealth of thrift ; and show'd them all the leanness
Of wasted treasure, and of squander'd strength ;
How the tall pines, our young nobility,
Cast in the shapes the sculptor loves the best,
Are first to fall, and sooner than the brier ;
And if the cottar wears a wrinkled front
In the same years when they are marble-smooth,
A few more summers, and the gifted one
Is feebler than the grandsire of his slave.
He and his fellows rose on me and mine,
And were discomfited ; I speak of it
Not in resentment ; for I pass'd it by,
Seeking no other vengeance than the sum
Of that ill venture working in his soul ;
And to this day have met him without scorn,
As though I had no memory of the deed.
But he will spring, for envy never sleeps,
If others wake not ; then my double right
Will be, altho' my will be loth to stir,

To bid him bid farewell to his own land
While I am ruler in it." He ceased awhile.
I said unto myself, "Shall I not rise?
Tho' sick and faint shall I keep silence now,
And hear my enemy dishonour me
And not cry out 'Thou liest'? Should I hear
Her words, like dews of pity on my heart,
Sear'd by the heat of hate, and not exclaim
'Hold! they are drops of poison falling on
A memory, and a conscience void of ill?'"
Alas! that judge with his inviolate tongue,
Conscience, whose eye is clearest in the dark,
Whose voice is loudest in the silent night,
Echoed my calm accuser; and I stood
Between my judge and him, as one in chains,
My body feeble, and my soul afraid.
Again the pitiless accents came to me
Breathing another spirit: "Yet I know
There is a secret wonder-working spell
Can make the sinews of a giant weak;
Can take ambition captive as a child
Might lead a lion with its little hand;
That, as a sunbeam from a mirror cast
Blinds the eye to the image drawn thereon,
Hides self-hood from itself, and all its gauds.
It is the might of woman over man,
The power the loved one wields o'er him who loves.
Have I not seen, O Sappho, that his heart,
Inconstant as the many-featured moon,

Yet looks for ever unto thee its sun,
And when 'tis full turns the same face to thee?
Have I not seen him clothe thy slightest word
With richest meaning, though his ears were deaf
To mighty matters round him? and his tongue
Hush on a sudden but to hear thy voice?
For what is it men seek but sympathy?
And wherefore find they not? 'Tis Good alone,
Like sunshine, that is imaged from without;
Evil, like darkness, is the lack of it,
And hides itself. So, if we seek to know
For sake of pride, to rule for sake of hate,
To gather riches but as limbs of Self,
We find that all around us there is cold,
As if ice mountains were the walls of Time,
And all the glow of life goes out of us
Without return, for others' love is not.
So is not sympathy the soul of all,
Winging all thoughts and feelings to and fro?
And love exchanged is perfect sympathy;
So that a lover leads a twofold life,
The one his own, the other his in her,
And she her own life, and her life in him;
But the unloving, throned o'er others' lives,
Not living in their hearts, live not at all.
If power be woman's star as well as man's,
As thou, O Sappho, know'st full well as I,
She strives to grasp it not by strength of arm,
Or by proud words, but by her subtle wit

And steadfast will. Bethink thee what a man
Thou mightest yoke unto thee, one who bends
To evil with the weight of all his good !
If that be left to climb, like a wild vine,
That runs to fruitless waste, about his soul,
And sap his strength in thriftless purposes,
That overlap each other like the sprays
That end in nothing, he will die unknown,
With scarce the fragment left of a light song
To witness to him ; one who, train'd to use
By timely counsels and by tender arts,
Like the pruned vine, would fill himself with good
As with new wine ; till those who tasted it
Should bless the vineyard and the husbandman.
And your twin names should live in aftertimes ;
His for great virtues reap'd by this fair isle ;
Thine for those virtues sown by woman's love."

III

Then was it but a phantom voice I heard
In my dark chamber, or the tongue of her
Whom I had loved so long, whose love I sought
More thirstily than any other boon
The Gods could give me ? For she spoke these words
With a low cry ; " If I were not first doom'd
To bitter knowledge, which must fall to him,
As it hath fall'n to many, and must fall,
To know that mortal love, like mortal life,

Is vain ; and like the sweet breath of a flower,
Flies from us, and is caught upon the winds,
With none to drink its sweetness : so it breathes
Out of our hearts, with none to gather it ;
And the heart dies while yet its youth is strong.
For men and women, born for one another,
For ever seem to wander thro' this world,
And never meet ; or only, when to meet
Is vain, and worse than never meet at all—
If I were not the first to drink this cup—
If I were free, as once I was, to muse,
Of him, or him, the blackhair'd or the brown,
And wake unharm'd as from a summer dream,
I might bear all, so I might make him free,
And from his sun of passion borrow light
As a pale moon ; if friendship were as sure
As the soft moonshine when the sun is not.
Knowing not aught, I might take this for all ;
And, as cold waters smit by rosy light
Seem to the phantasy as golden wine,
Dream it was love because I named it such.
But what if I should prove in afterdays
All that he feels for me, but not for him,
And endless rancours should be born of us,
Or sudden fury? But 'twill not be so ;
I speak vain words. Oh ! I have known it all,
The phantasy, the yearning, and the pain ;
All that his soul can suffer I have borne,
But not from him." Then silence for a space ;

For the two voices in the chamber ceased.
Softly I heard him rise up and pass out,
And she was left alone. After a while
She said, "How could I tell him what I felt?
Tho', when he gives me to another, thus
'Twere time to unfold my secret. Oh 'tis past,
My lonely rapture shall not be unveil'd ;
But casketed like some too precious gem,
Which to be seen might tempt untoward hands
To rudely handle it. Oh all is past :
I know not, now he is no longer here ;
I know not if he were a god or man,
So glorious more than others. If I spoke,
Pittacus would but wonder or deride ;
Yet not deride, for he is mercy's self ;
Or ply such counsel as would make me feel
For ever after lesser than myself,
And I could never meet him, or behold
In those calm eyes the thought that I am mad,
To say such words." This was the end of all.
And tho' my tongue gave utterance to no sound,
My spirit cried within me, "Let me die !
'Tis vain to arm for vengeance against fate.
Tell me not my beloved loves the man
I thought I could have hated without cause !"
Oh ! this was only wanting to awake
The smouldering embers ! If I lay in hush'd
And seeming rest, 'twas but to steer my course
More calmly thro' the future ; while all pride

And angry motions were asleep in sorrow,
Like winds that lull in twilight ; yet my thoughts
Flew thro' the coming years, tho' my sad heart
Was faint and cold. Oh ! I would fly as far
From all I loved as love had flown from me,
And never more be found. What if the sea
Should swallow me, and quench my burning pain
In its own tumults ? Or in some grey cavern,
After long years of silence, I be found
Only dry bones, whose living heart and brain
Had scatter'd round them all that lives again
In others' memories ? or a robber's hand
Should steal from me my hated days, and leave
My eyes, that look'd upon an inner sun,
To be plucked out by eagles, and my dust
To flee away, like the last thought of me,
Before the homeless winds ? Oh ! I would fly !
But first, if I but live, it shall be seen
If he, my judge, who thinks he reads my soul,
If he, who knows me, knows this, whether all
His knowledge of the weakness he upbraids
May shield him from the strength he dare not scorn !

* * * * *

KLEIS, OR THE RETURN

Him the wanderer o'er the world
Far away the winds will bear,
And restless care.

A lovely little girl is ours,
 Kleis the beloved,
 Kleis is her name.
Whose beauty is as the golden flowers.

SAPPHO.

I

THE winds are sleeping on the Lesbian bays ;
And scarce the silver of the tideless sea
Lisps on the golden sands. A morn of Spring,
Ægean May, such as we dream of now,
Trembled in light and music o'er the land ;
And melted into sunshine every cloud
That peep'd across the azure deep, or plumed
The mountain crests. The little isles are drown'd
In gleamy haze, that after noon shall paint
Their beauty on the waters ; shores that shine
With cities, breezy headlands crown'd with towers ;
But nearer the still purple of the deep

Pictured with all their hues the garden bowers
Glooming above the carven terraces,
Whose leaves blown back by the soft ocean breath
Softly returned. On sunny roofs were ranged
Many a fair pictured vase, and marble urn,
Burning with disks of breathing flowers that lean'd
Their large leaves ; and from open chambers flow'd
Clear voices, sometimes converse, sometimes mirth ;
Or flash of fiery song, as tho' the sun
In that swift heart had turned itself to sound.
The fisher that went forth before the sun
Sleeps in the shadow of his bark, or streams
His nets along the beach, well satisfied,
While his young boy goes singing by his side.
Here, in the quiet of a windless cove,
The stately argosy from farthest isles,
Egyptian wharf, or mighty moles of Tyre,
Stays with all hands astir to gather back
Its weary wings ; and hark ! there comes a cry
From homesick hearts, as the great anchor falls.
And where the champaign with its wavy hills,
Its goodly orchards curtain'd with the vine,
And carpeted with harvest, slopes toward
The city gate—amid the dusty cloud,
Tost up from trampling hoof and chariot wheel,
To the crimson mantle, and the starry helm,
Of one that thrusts aside the stream of men,
And cries with note of warning—to the band
Of market girls that bear aloft fresh fruits,

Fresh flowers ; to dames that bring their homely urns
Fill'd from the fountain hard against the gate,
Upon whose plashing steps, Cythera stooping
Within the hollow of a wreathen pearl
That tilts her up just risen amid the foam
More than all mortal beauty, marvellous form,
Rains on the marble conch eternal dew.
The old wives on the carven wonder lean
Their wither'd arms, the while the pitcher fills ;
And laughing damsels listen to the sound
Of island ditties, and forget to fill ;
And the barefooted children shout and gibe
All in the sunlight and the dew of morn :
And over steep, and shore, and mount, and vale,
Hovers a murmur, like a low-toned song,
Sent up from quivering leaves, and moaning wave,
And thro' the silvery light, and azure calm
Soars, like a hymn of joy. Not far away
There is a cape, that dips its verdurous fringe
Into the waves, and from amid the trees
That crest it I can see the gracious front
Of a fair home, its threshold hid with vines
Of ancient growth, and pale-eyed jessamine,
Its lattices flung open to the morn.
But who are these that by the curving path
Move down toward the shore ? one is a form
Tall, and of that soft aspect which they wear
Who drink into their veins the unclouded suns,
And in their dusky foreheads seem to change them

To moonlight. Her large eyes and crimson lip
Burn'd with the fire which through her tawny cheek
Lighten'd but seldom ; those dark dewy orbs
Quiver'd with arrows of the spirit fast
As fireflies in the gloom. The other lean'd
Her frail old age upon the younger arm ;
And yet not feeble, for the restless light
That ever trembled in the young girl's eyes
Seem'd drawn from deeper fountains in her own ;
And neither years, nor sorrows of the world,
Shadows of coming death, nor many tears,
Had quench'd those lamps that burn'd beneath her brows
As tho' they saw thro' far millennial shades
Of cycles down unto the end of all.

II

And Sappho stood, and linger'd for a while,
Shading her brows to look upon the shore,
The piled city, and the purple hills.
And with a sigh that seem'd to wing her soul
Back to the dawn of Youth, thro' joy and tears
Commingling, like the dews and light that lay
On land and sea betwixt her and the sun,
Sweetly she said ; " It is another morn ;
And yet I live, tho' many days like these
I cannot hope to breathe ; yet all the more
The blessed hours that give me rest from pain
Are openings into Heaven, thro' which I see

The lovely hopes, and phantasies of Youth,
Waft down to me from the blue arch of day,
Melodious as the skylark's sundrown'd song,
And radiant as his earthward-fluttering wing.
Yet dreams, however fair, are only dreams,
Tho' from the Unseen, where the Immortals are,
And they are flown, they look back for a moment.
Ah! can they raise the stricken flower of Life,
And bring back Youth? oh! tell me not of bliss
Born of Imagination, the great eagle
Whose eyes may dare to look upon the sun
And are not blind; oh! tell me not of Fame,
Although its outspread wings may hide the earth,
And with their shadows touch the walls of Time.
Tell me not of those moments in our lives,
Which, like the troubled seas that flash with light,
Mix glory and despair, but leave the heart
Still as the deeps from which the storm is pass'd,
And not a wave is heard; for in my soul
The pæans of old triumphs faintly heard,
The voices of departed joys, loves, hopes,
Power, honours, exultations, are but ghosts,
And, like thin ghosts that vanish in the sun,
Charm not so much as that diviner spell,
That from the heart of Nature speaks to ours.
Now, as I breathe the spirits from the deep,
And see these shores that first I saw, the hills,
The azure isles, the selfsame pulse of old
Thrills me again, and tho' the arm of Death

Daily advances its cold shadow o'er me
Nigher and nigher, moments like to these
The first I felt, the last I hope to feel ;
Such moments, O dear girl, make it appear
As tho' to die were to be born again.
Ah, lovely land, perchance in days to come,
When I am dead, and thunder-bearing change
Hath left, of all this proud Time in full sail,
A crazy wreck, some lonely, listening Muse
Shall mark thee thro' the cloud of Ages flown,
As I, behind the veil of many years,
Behold my proper life ; and of my songs,
Faint echoes of the fiery life within,
A few sad notes shall tremble, like the light
That strikes the zenith when the sun is down."
With that she stay'd midway between the shore
And that vine-mantled home, a little space
Of musing and of calm ; then with fond hand,
Tenderly laid upon the sunny brow
Of that fair one, she said—" My little Kleis ;
Tho' thou art taller than thy mother is,
So call'd because she was the silver key
That should unlock my heart of hearts ; my Kleis,
Oh let me look into thy face awhile,
If so I can recall the thing I was
When thy few years were mine ; yes, in thine eyes
I see the stars of mirth, the lamp of thought.
On thy smooth brow the free winds from the seas
Have laid their cool wings, night and morn, until

Spirits, less pure than Honour, Hope, and Love,
Find no rest there ; but kinder Fates than mine,
Under the links of graver sympathies,
Have chain'd the God of Fancy in thy soul ;
So that his darings shall not lift thee up
Above the lights and shadows of thine home,
Its cares, its consolations, and its joys,
The tender memories of the parted year,
Hope of to-morrow's sunshine, and a time
Of ample harvests, and fair vintage days,
And songs when toil is o'er. Thou shalt not feel
Swift passions toss thee, like midsummer storms,
That snatch the green leaf from the virgin vine ;
No, nor those thoughts, like Autumn winds and rain,
That rend the naked boughs, and strew the leaves,
Or weep them off in silence to the ground.
The great soul of thy grandsire, now at peace,
Descending thro' thy mother's into thine,
Tempers within thy heart the throbs of mine,
Its glories, and its anguish. Come with me ;
Yonder he sleeps, within an urn he sleeps,
Lull'd by the music of an endless dirge,
Upon yon slope that dips into the blue
Its green the soonest in the days of Spring.
The hyacinths cluster there, as though athirst
To drink the azure seas ; the anemone,
And violet tremble, and four whispering planes
Make an immortal temple o'er his dust.
Not far apart he rests, but just so far

As makes the thunder of the waves below
A pleasant murmur, a deep harmony,
Wedding the treble of the surf that wails
Among the rocks, and shells, and the soft sighings
Of the broad leaves that rustle over him.
Come thither, Kleis, with me ; come hear that hymn
Sung to the spirit of a noble man,
Who wrought in act what I in many a song
Have mock'd, like echoes in a narrow place.

III

Thither I bore his urn, ten years ago,
By moonlight, sadly claspt unto my heart ;
And I could hear my sighs, for every wind
Was still ; it was a dreaming Autumn night
Nigh unto Winter, in the latter days ;
And the full moon rode stately up the seas
Of purple, caught at intervals thro' rifts
Of sable cloud ; and then the illumined Earth
Smiled on me a funereal welcome stern,
And sorrowful ; and from the city rose,
Thro' the pale hush of night, sounds that to me
Were sadder than a banquet skeleton,
Of festal jubilee, of harp and voice,
Unto my widow'd heart disconsolate
Like shadows of the Dead, fantastic ghosts
Seen pale and cold far over Lethe's stream."
Just then they rounded a thyme-breathing hill,

Infolding to a valley gay with flowers,
And mossy-green and cool, for it drank in
The spirits of the seas, and multiplied
Its sighs, its lamentations, and its thunders,
With manifold echoes ; nothing fil'd it now
But an unsleeping murmur, holy-sweet,
Much like the weird tongue of the midnight silence,
Muttering to wakeful ears that wait for Death.
And halfway 'twixt it and the yellow beach
A little temple, open to the sea,
Stood under shelter of four whispering planes.
They enter'd by two marble steps, and heard
The melancholy music of the waters
Wax loud, as in the hollows of a shell.
Upon a pedestal beneath the dome
Rested an urn of gracious mould, and round it
The doubling echoes loved to swell and fall,
An inarticulate utterance, as of grief
Made musical with love. And " Here, " she whisper'd ;
" Here do I joy to linger, and to feel
The presence of *his* Shade ; here, oft and oft,
I have held converse with Elysian dreams,
And heard the voices of the Gods go by
In melody ; here have I wept unseen,
Alone, and sung my songs unheard, and drawn
From Nature something of her spirit pure.
Hither the Hamadryads have come down
Out of their arching coverts, and cool grotts,
And talk'd with Nereus ; here the darksome steeds

Of the Sea-king have joy'd to plant their hoofs,
After swift travel o'er the snowy crests
Of roaring seas ; and the surf-slinging wheels
Have rested, scattering off their pearly rain,
While Tritons wound their rosy conchs, and startled
The winding solitudes, and mountainheads,
And gave wild welcome to the Woodnymphs there.
Here have I sat forgetting, and forgot,
Morn, noon, and even ; and on summernights
Have mark'd the ripples twinkle in the moon.
Here have I woven passionate songs, and sung them
With loud clear voice unto a symphony
Of the sea-music, sweet as Summer, shaking
His timbrel in the valleys ; desolate
As Winter, when the first storm-winged winds
Rush out thro' closing portals of the West,
And take the Ocean Giants by the hair.

IV

Methinks the Summerday when I was born
Flows back to me with its felicities,
Oft as I look upon this pleasant land,
And morning sea. Methinks the days between,
With all their hues and shadows, like vain clouds
That shatter into atoms in the light,
Melt off, and leave my vision free to Heaven ;
Heaven, or that Earth that seems to breathe of it
Whereon our eyes first open. Oh ! I wake ;

'Tis Morn ! the low winds 'twixt my lattice bars
Plain silver-sweet ; and soon a balmy gust
Hath thrown them back, far over the treetops,
That with a whispering sound, like sighing ghost,
Answer the wailing waters swinging soft,
And make their shapeless motions in the dusk
Of twilight. My dim eyes, but half unclosed,
Over whose lids the plumes of some sweet dream
Are hovering still, follow the purple plain
Of the great Deep ; along the Oceanfloor
Tapestries of gorgeous tissue are let down,
Which my half-waking fancy seems to tread
Right to the gate of Day. 'Tis morn, 'tis morn !
And herald Winds are strowing for the Sun
The golden road, whereon his wheels shall roll
Far off along the East ! the God leaps up
In strength renew'd ! I hide mine eyes from him !
And all the thin-wing'd phantoms of grey Night
Fly forth from mine illumined orbs ; hark ! hark !
The waves begin to sing, the winds to blow ;
And from the vines into my chamber climbing,
And from the green glooms of the gardenwalks,
And from the forests on the mountainside,
Goes up the anthem of the Morn ! awake !
For I am waking ! I am singing ; sing !
And with a jubilant gay smile the shores
And capes flash out, and temples by the sea !

V

Ah! sad Old Age, that, like the stem, survives
Leaf, flower, and fruit; Old Age, that not alone
Quenches the Soul's bright signals in the eye,
Pulls down the heart's warm banners in the cheek;
But, in the heart itself and in the soul,
Leaves only memories, that, like winter winds,
Howl thro' the roofless halls, and desolate courts
Of sometime Temples; memories, wither'd leaves
Of Summer roses; pale discrowned Kings;
Thin-voiced ghosts. Yet will I not lament
That I have spoken with the Dead in life;
That I have seen the Teian crown'd with flowers,
Changed with the wild Alcæus glorious words;
That I have kiss'd Erinna, and on the shores
Of Himera talk'd with grave Stesichorus.
What if the grey sea part us in this world,
Or Acheron in the Shades? they cannot part
Our souls, which blissful thoughts, and golden words,
Have link'd for ever. I will not lament
That I have tasted the good things of Time,
Tho' their remember'd sweetness seems like sorrow.
This mystic Life is as a soundless sea,
The tempests shatter it, the thunders shade;
And inarticulate voices from the clouds
Roll over it, and the winds run riot on it;
Yet are these passing moments heavenly-fair,
Breathings of Spring, Midsummer glories, hues

Of Autumn, trembling showers of light, and smiles
Of moonshine dimpling; and, when storms have ceased,
Hope, like the halcyon, sings; and I have lived
Through all, and glass'd within me every change.
I will not murmur. Yet, oh! could it be,
That I might see once more before I die,
But one of those, whose songs, like vesper airs
That flutter among harpstrings, keep my soul
A trembling with the sympathies of old.
If I could touch the hand of one I loved
Just as mine eyes grew dim, that bliss would be
More full of hope in Death, than pleasant dreams,
That kindle in the brains of drowning men.
Better the twilight of a day of June
Than noontides of December without sun.
Better to die for love, so that we lie
Upon the breast of Hope, than live for ever
Beneath the starless void of loveless thoughts
And phantasies that darken to despair."

VI

She spoke; and with the passion of her heart
Her aged cheek was flushed, her eye was bright;
And soon the tears that she imagined shone
In her upturned eyes. And while she stood
Full of unutterable tenderness,
Wistfully gazing o'er the sheeny sea,
As tho' she thought of that unfathom'd deep

Deeper than the deep sea, that must be broken
Ere those she thought of could be render'd up—
Lo there! a bark at anchor in a bay,
Doubling itself with all its cordage clear,
And motions in the blue; and two or three,
Into a shoreward shallop stepping light,
Sway'd with the surf toward the strand; and she
Look'd idly on, and as she look'd, she sigh'd.
They stood together by the ripple's edge,
Mother and daughter, and they heard the keel
Gride 'mid the shells and sand, and one came forth,
Leaning a youthful shoulder to the hand
Of an old man, a weary man and sad;
Yet more with toil and sorrow than with years,
As feebly he stept down upon the shore.
And when he felt his feet upon the earth,
His brow he shaded with a trembling hand;
But underneath they saw some stealthy drops
Glitter and fall; but they were quickly exhaled
Amid the fire of his upgazing eyes,
As roundabout he look'd with such grave love,
As might a child, who had not seen for long
His mother, and now saw that face again
Familiar to his soul, and now restored
To his adoring eyes. So he, his palms
Cross'd on his staff, his face a little raised,
Round to the mountains turn'd, the woods, the streams
Glancing afar, and underneath them all
The marble city gleaming by the sea.

And dropping on his knee, he said : " Great Gods,
I thank ye, oh ! I thank ye for this sight,
More than if ye had spared me half the ills,
That in my homeless heart, and vexed frame
Have housed since last I left this lovely isle.
Ye from that altar have inhaled the smoke
Of my continual sighs : have seen the flame
Of wasted passions, and have daily heard
The murmurs of my soul-consuming care.
Spare me henceforth, and be content with that
My life hath offered up of grief and pain ;
And suffer me to rest a little here
Where I was born, until the day I die.
If I have been rebellious ; if I blamed
Your hard behests, this moment is to me
A bliss, that like a flower amid the snow,
Springs up from mine affliction and my tears ;
For which I bless ye ; 'tis a moment made
More than much joy by contrast of my sorrows ;
I thank ye, oh ! I thank ye. Home, my Home !
If thou wert not, sweet Island, what thou art,
Fairer than fairest ; if thou wert a rock
Barren of all things but the surfweed cold,
And tortured by the storms, now, well I know,
Thou wouldst be dearer to me than the blest
Hesperides, or, in great Babylon,
The Imperial Gardens that ascend to Heaven
By steps, that seem each like a happy isle.
For, as the day comes back in sweeter dreams ;

As we remember a beloved face
Most kindly when afar ; as barren crags
In the blue air look blissful as the sky ;
With every imperfection thou wouldst be
The Elysium where my heart was free of ills,
Whither it turns to look upon itself
In days when effluence of diviner spirit
Went from it, like the exhalations pure
Breathed from the flowers at dawn. But oh ! thou art
Most beautiful ; no Poet's fancy thou,
No Patriot's idol, but a cradle meet
For birth of Gods, and for diviner men !
Now as I see thee set with mountain towers,
Like many crowns, the lovely Queen o' the seas,
I feel the ancient spirit of the clime
Lift up my heart like wings ; the breath I draw
From thy deep valleys, and thy breezy hills,
Seems like flown Youth relapsing thro' my veins,
Impossible to die ; and all my soul,
A harp to Nature's tender cunning, breathes
Rapture, and at her bidding seems to sing !
Oh ! if my living love for thee might be
The measure of my glory after death,
Thy young men and thy maidens would forget
No song that I have sung, as from my heart
No aspect of thy beauty hath been lost,
My native isle ; and Lethe's very self
Shall only wash the bitter from my heart,
And leave my love the purer. Even now

I have forgot my poverty, and cares,
Anguish, and agony, and the hissing tongues
Of evil Fortune, as mine aged eyes
Follow once more the curving of thy shores ;
As the omnisonous seas, whose nearer waves
Are thunder, till far off, and farther still,
They die into a sweet monotony
Much like a mournful song. Oh ! it is thou,
My Mother, and thou only that canst lull
Asleep disastrous memories, with thy touch,
Thy magic, and the music of thy tongue."

VII

Sappho stood leaning forward, like a child
Who hears far music, and would catch the song,
Her fond eyes overclouded, and her heart
Visibly stirr'd : they caught her ere she fell.
And while she lay in trance, the old man pass'd,
And look'd with a strange meaning on her face.
A moment more knowledge, as lightning, shook
His soul, and quiver'd o'er his limbs, and joy
Moved in his unaccustom'd heart like pain ;
And with a cry that ran along the shore
He claspt her in those weary arms ; he kiss'd
Her pale cold brow ; he laid his heart near hers,
And breathed low loving words into her ear.
Whether it was the sound of that great cry,
Or those low-breathed words, she woke, and saw

Him kneeling by her, and she dimly smiled,
As the last glimmer of a wintry sun,
And faintly said—"Speak to me, I am faint ;
I may not speak, though fain I would ; for now
Life fights with Death within me ; speak, but spare me ;
Else shall I die, and my o'ertasked spirit
With its excess of feeling cease to feel !"
He soothed, he raised her up, and with his arm,
Staying her as a tender brother might,
Till she could freely go, into her ear
He dropt such tokens of old time, dear words,
Forgotten memories, snatches of sweet song.
He brought back sunbright mornings, jocund evens
Drown'd long ago, fleet rivulets, in the sea.
Out of grey corners of the Past he raked
Such buried dreams as lighten'd forth, when stirr'd,
Like diamonds in the dark, such sparkish mirth
Of Wits, that once had laugh'd at feasts, and now
Seem'd in his echo, to laugh o'er again,
And change the sun into a golden lamp
Over a banquet-table. Oh ! she listen'd
And thought she heard the music in her ears
Of festal hymns, and shouts of jubilee ;
And thro' sweet melodies, the noise of storms,
Thunders of battle, sound of civil jars
Rise from oblivion ; as a morning mist,
That vanish'd in the glory of noonday,
Out of the hollow darknesses beneath
That once were bowery valleys, soars again

And floating round the desert peaks of snow
Takes colours from the sunset. As he spoke,
All her old heart, a lovely ruin touch'd
With mossy green, put forth a shoot of life
Kin to the sprays of Youth ; she smiled ; her cheek
Mantled with sudden rose that made her seem
To him a moment as in days of prime,
That vital bloom illumining her face.
He thought he saw her as she stood before him,
Such as she was in the young April morns,
When she ran out upon the tufted capes
Over the sea, dancing upon the thyme,
And violets, with a timbrel in her hand,
Her loose locks streaming landward like a Nymph
Come down to charm a seagod. And they turn'd
To one another, laughter in their eyes ;
And those two faces lighted from within
Seem'd as two ancient lamps of cunning mould
Lit for a farewell festival. He said ;—
“ Old friend, as I look down into thine eyes,
Methinks soft plumes from the flown wings of Time
Fall back upon my heart ; for I have been
A wanderer, and a guest at many hearths,
And heard strange tongues, and pined on desert shores,
And rock'd on the wild seas ; from mountaintops
Have look'd on rare new lands, and slept beneath
The curtain of dread forests, and beheld
The glory of the islands. I have been
A restless bird, that flies from Spring to Spring,

In eager search of what I never found,
Joy, when the hearth is darken'd, and the Gods
That keep the house are scatter'd. Oh ! this heart
Is rich with many pageants, but no peace ;
And all the hollow of departed Time
Seems to my backward vision like the sea,
Shower'd o'er with splendours from the gorgeous clouds
Of even, after sunset, and my Fancy,
A stately temple set through all its aisles
With hues and forms of beauty. But my soul,
That thirsted for the Unattainable,
Knowledge on knowledge piling art on art,
Fares as the poor man that hath stored up wealth,
And, when the wither'd hand of Time presents
The cup he craved, he cannot taste the wine.
I have seen all things ; I have drunk of Life,
The water and the wine ; but in the crowd
Of memories that o'ergrew my heart, and shed
Their blossoms off untimely, still one thought
Is changeless there, the holy sense of Home,
An evergreen that bears no purple flowers ;
Yet evermore, tho' torn and shower'd with tears,
Sweeter than the wild roses. Oft I said,
'I'll lull me with the poisons of despair,
Till my dead life become a living death,
And feels, on earth, the eternal sleep come on.'
Sometimes I thought 'When Fate hath will'd, 'tis best
To bow the neck and make the best of Ill.'
'Twas vain ; for under all good thoughts, or ill,

That earthquake of the heart, the fiery thirst
Of change, like everburning sulphur, toil'd.
My will hath been the sceptre of my Fate,
An evil glory glanced from the midheart
Of the red star of War ; thwart influences
Sway'd me, and call them by what names ye will,
Pleasure, or Glory, or Ambition ; mean
Disquiet, fatal to the Poet's heart ;
Not like the tempest of a summernight,
That leaves a lovelier world at dawn ; but fierce
As the hot blast that withers at noon ;
And, as the rude hand of an aimless child,
Jars the sweet music of a lyre well-tuned.

VIII

Then all the mystery dawn'd upon my heart,
Solemn as moon-lit silence broke with hymns,
Of those, that from the dust and coil of things
Standing apart, with shadows of old years
Whisper, or gaze as from an inland peak
O'er the vast kingdoms of the days to come,
Hid in pale glories like a midnight plain ;
Of those who listen to the charmed tongues
Of the Pierides, from laurel walks
Peeping with amaranth-woven hair, and eyes,
That glance across the twilight, as the stars
That never set. I sigh'd, and pray'd for peace,
To keep my Fancy like a vestal lamp

Unshaken of the winds ; for eyes, to see
But Her ; for ears that should be deaf as sleep
To every pulse of change, and hear no sound
But her still utterance ; for that holy calm,
That o'er my heart, as on a sunny isle
Wall'd in with mighty rocks that flows within
With clear sweet rivulets, set with moss and flowers,
Should rest like Summer, though all things beyond
Should rock the endless tempest, and the winds
Should whirl the waters to the thunderclouds.
I yearn'd to sit in such sweet solitude,
And make the music of an inner life
Soar o'er the clash of arms, and the shrill cries
Of worldly Passions, and the witching tongues
Of Sirens, holding forth the cup of Life,
And purple Pleasures. Idle were those thoughts ;
Tho' rosy-bright with promise as the Morn.
There is no bliss on earth so true as Hope,
Tho' she be false as rainbows ; and her wings,
Swift sails that follow in the wake of Day,
Must never rest, or see the sun go down."

IX

Thus as he spoke, she stood, as one who hears
A melody, breathed to her in a dream,
With waking ears, and sees the vision true.
And with her folded palms, and earnest eyes,
She seem'd as one who utter'd in a prayer

A blessing, or thanksgiving : and she said—
“Speak on, oh ! speak ; thou canst not tire mine ears.
Such words I never hoped to hear from thee.
Such thoughts have ransom'd thy sad heart from death,
And set the desert of thine Age with buds
And hues of Spring ; as when the tender hand
Of Autumn lays for the white feet of Death
Young flowers, and April green ; and roses glow,
And hyacinths peep from out the dead oakleaves.
So was it in the days, when thou and I
Strove with each other. I was fain to taunt
Thy boyhood into prowess, in thine eyes
Flashing the silver arrows of my song.
And thou, my rival in the joust of Arts,
Didst make me blush for my rose-wreathed lyre,
With such proud answers, as the sound of steel
Ringing on brass, or trumpet with the lute.
Ah ! then thy brow was smooth, and thy dark hair
Cluster'd around the palace of thy thought,
Like Pallas' marble temple in the shade.
Thy breath was as the spirit of the seas,
Through all the inland valleys streaming life,
Stirring the little lilies and the heads
Of the dark pines into a sombre joy ;
And bearing with it, from the Infinite
Of Youth and Fancy, music like the sound
Of many waters. We heard the tread of men
To battle, and the neighing of the steeds,
The burning axles, and the chariotwheels

Flashing amid the dust, with the blown hair
Of warriors leaning forward on the foe.
In sweeter notes we heard the songs at eve,
The Pæan, and the sacrificial hymn ;
And laurell'd captains in their iron sat,
Or beat the earth with armed heel, or drain'd
The red cup, listening to the thrilling strings.
Again the notes of freedom stir thy tongue,
As when together, that sweet morn of June
We sail'd forth gaily for Arion's bay.
Gaily with garlands of fresh-gather'd flowers
We hung the prow ; and, as it clave the foam,
And flung it back on the wine-colour'd sea,
Scattering the purple with a rain of pearl,
We sang together what Arion sang
When Music vanquish'd Fate ; we sang the World,
With all its shows, its tumults, and its pride,
Laid like the stormy crests of rolling seas
Under the dark hand of Oblivion ;
Yet leaving the poor Poet, with his harp,
Safe, as of old Arion on the sands."

X

They pass'd by haunts which they had loved and scorn'd,
First loved in childhood ere the pride of years—
Tho' but a few more added to the few—
Trode underfoot their broken toys ; then scorn'd,
When flattering hopes, like sunbeams cast before,

Outstripp'd them, swifter than their little strength ;
As tho' their firstborn fancies had not been
First flights most apt to knit fresh-plumed wings
For eagle darings. Now they turn'd again
To their first loves, and laugh'd to think of all
Their after prides, now seen as vanities,
Which memory now could scarcely follow up ;
While every little bliss of infancy
Lit up again, as on the eastern hills
The setting sun casts back a loving smile.
Here was the mountain brook that sought the sea,
Where in a backstream they had thought to swim
Their shallop fashion'd with an earnest care,
And borne down gravely in their little arms,
But carrying too much sail, so that a gust,
After two voyages around the pool,
Laid it on its beam-ends, and the main stream
Caught it, and whirl'd it into the great sea,
Deaf to their cries and groans. Here was the reach
Of smooth sand, where the old man once had run
A race with his dead brother, and had left
The little Citharus ill at ease, and vex'd
With a self-scorn, when Sappho came to him,
Winsome and playful ; " Let us try together,"
She whisper'd, " and I wage that I shall win "—
Tho' well she knew that his must be the palm—
But he avenged himself on her, poor child,
Muttering, " Go to, a girl is but a fool !"
" See," said Alcæus, as they pass'd along,

“There was the schoolhouse, in whose little span
The soul of Homer lived, and fired again
The hearts of children, mine beyond them all.
And when I heard his music roll, I seem’d
Expanded unto Godlike strength, and dream’d
Of shouts, and fluttering manes, and wheels of war,
And starry-helm’d Olympians, frowning o’er
A thundercloud, or lightening thro’ the dust ;
While the shrill clamours of the rest at play,
Fill’d all the space beneath the awning vine
That shadow’d us, with twinkling of its leaves
Chequering the little court : till all at once,
While musing thus of arms, and foughten fields,
I grew Achilles to myself, and frown’d ;
And held my head so high, that others laugh’d,
And gibed, and vex’d me with quick taunts ; till one,
A pigmy cousin, felt my angry palm,
But render’d overmeasure, with such speed,
That my long limbs undipt in Styx, were proved
Not proof against Thersites ; and at last
I came to strife with one who was my friend,
And barter’d love for glory. Oh ! I stood,
One foot in triumph staid upon the neck
Of fall’n Patroclus, till a grey-hair’d man,
Like sudden Deity, came down upon me ;
And with a cloudy brow, but gentle words—
Alas ! they were the very words I loved,
The sounds of that weird harp, that, oft, and oft,
Have moved me unto tears—I blench’d with shame,

And hung my head ; he show'd me what I knew,
The great Pelides striving for his friend,
Not striving with him ; and I wept with shame."

XI

Then Sappho, parting from him, sought her home.
And after some few days they met again ;
Said Sappho to him ; " Hast thou seen once more
Thy brother and his mate ?" He answer'd her :
" At length I sought my old ancestral home
Slowly, and softly, as though I paused to hear,
From the old haunts and dear familiar ways,
The tongues of kindred and of friends, and dreamt—
So potent was the magic of the past—
To see again the faces, and the forms
Crossing the paths, or peeping from the doors,
Of those who long ago were only dust.
Was Citharus there whom I had left at home
To keep the house ?" Then Sappho said, " Alas !
If thou hast seen him, and canst truly say
He lives, 'tis but that living death when hopes
And memories fail together ; and the smile
That flickers o'er his face is but the joy
Of the caged bird that sings to see the sun,
And turns to sadness when he sees it not.
And when he sees thee now 'twill be, as though
He saw thee not ; such is the mortal man."
Alcæus said, " I knew by letters writ

At long, long intervals, and only read
After long years—so aimless were my ways,
So restless were my motions,—that no child
Was born to him—and so I had no fear
Of meeting at the gate unwelcome looks
Of those who knew me not : still less that he,
Whom I remember but a lisping babe,
Who look'd upon me from my mother's arms,
And knew me not, should look upon me now
With the same eyes unconscious as at first ;
That I should see him seated by the gate
And know him not. Was this the little one
With blue eyes and with curly locks, who heard
No sound until I shouted in his ear ?
Who made a sign that he was not the man
I sought, that his was not a home of mine ?
Whose snow white hairs shook in the wind ; whose hand
Trembled with fear that I should do him ill ?
I made him hear my name ; he shook his head.
I show'd him an old mark upon my wrist,
Dealt by a flint flung from his careless hand,
And when he saw the red blood from the wound
He wept with fear. He gazed with steadfast eyes—
Well had he known that mark in other days—
Then sigh'd, as tho' the childish trouble stirr'd
His aged heart again ; in vain ; at last
Baffled and sad I sang into his ear
A simple ditty I had sung to him
When he was but a babe, and I a boy,

Who threw him up, and caught him ere he fell,
And laugh'd him into laughter : then at last
He seem'd to wake up, and he reach'd his arms,
And fell upon my neck, and spoke my name ;
And all my great age did not hide from his
That something of the boyhood that had been ;
And memories in a moment kindled up,
As from a spark among the sapless leaves,
And chaff of the last Autumn days, a fire
That runs along the ground. While we embraced
His aged mate came forth ; she was not changed
In aught that makes true beauty beautiful.
Her tender, loving spirit beam'd the more
Through her worn aspect, ev'n as when unworn
That would have shone forth all the lovelier through
A beggar's weeds ; even as a summer rose
Is all the dearer seen at wintertide ;
Come with me thither, come with me again."

XII

Sappho went with him ; and they pass'd across
The outer court into the inner house,
And met the aged inmates at the door.
They stood within the armoury again,
Four aged forms—the last of those who heard
The voice of Pittacus that bridal night—
They stood, like spectres after all those years,
Rather than living, on the very spot

Where Myrsilus had fallen ; and once more
Their tongues were heard within the armed walls,
That glitter'd, as of old, with sword and shield ;
For not a speck of rust was suffer'd there
So watchful was the housewife he had left.
Yet not more careful to keep fair his home
For his return, if ever that should be,
Than the fond brother, faithful, as of old,
To send by trusty hands the stored wealth
Of thrifty years, whenever it was known
Thro' merchants passing to and fro, or friends
He chanced to meet, that he had fix'd his home
In mainland city, or island for a while.

XIII

Far into the calm moonlight night they sat
Together, and remember'd the old life ;
Then Sappho spoke unto her aged friend ;—
“Thou hast not told me of the lands afar,
Thy cares, and perils, and long wanderings.
The thoughts and acts that in thy memory seem
Pictures half hidden by the dust of years,
And seen in dusky halls at close of day,
To me would be as paintings, bright and new ;
I pray thee tell me of thy past and thee.”
Alcæus paused awhile, then spoke again :
“O Sappho, ere I speak to thee of that,
Pardon me, if I fain would learn from thee

A few clear words, that would be as a light
In a dark corner of this heart, that still
Was dark, whatever momentary joy
Cross'd my wayfarings ; ay might be as no
To my worn heart ;—but, as the eye is fond
To pierce the shadows, where imagined shapes
Lie crouching—so my soul desires to know,
Though knowledge might be nothing to me now.
O Sappho, now that we are met again
In our old age, like two who might embrace
Across an open tomb, what need to hide
The secrets of our hearts, as in the days
When pride and fear go hand in hand, and shun
The daylight ? For 'tis moonlight with us now :
'Tis memory only. Oh ! I will confess
I loved thee once as lovers love ; and now,
As men may love who first have loved as they ;
A love as sweet as summernight, with stars
After the sun of morn, not less divine
But more serene : thou knowest how I strove
Against the foremost Lesbian, him who was
In peace or war the noblest man of all,
As though he was a traitor and a foe ?
Dost thou remember the ill-fated hours
Beneath thy roof, when sick and sad I lay
Long days and nights oblivious, and ye thought
The lack of speech was loss of hearing too,
And freely spoke of me ? Did I not hear
What pierced me worse than the Athenian sword,

Than any poison'd shaft, than death itself,
And would have brought the doom which then I craved,
Had it struck sooner? That thy love had been
Given to another, never could be mine?
Whether it were the voice that reach'd me then,
Or my o'erfever'd brain, or envious thoughts
Of one who was my master, jealous fear
Possess'd me that the treasure I desired
Was given to him, the man who spoke with thee,
Ev'n Pittacus; 'twas well I was too weak
To slay him that same moment! And when youth,
Like the strong swimmer's arm that cleaves the surge,
Had rescued me, and I rose up again,
He was the moveless star that none can reach;
He was the honour'd ruler of the realm,
The centre circled by the love of all;
And what was I? Disown'd by her I loved,
Despised by him I hated; for my heart
Bore this man's pity, and his kindness,
As weights that sank me deeper in despair.
Long after I repented; and my scorn
Wreak'd itself on myself alone; meanwhile
How could I rival one worthy of aught
Thro' worth of soul, or be avenged on one
Who vanquish'd ill with good? So I resolved
To work against his power, that in my turn
I might wreak pardon on him; if he fell,
He should take mercy: well, thou know'st the rest.
How many days, and weeks, and months of guile

I practised to win o'er the noblest men
Of Lesbos, luring them by subtle speech,
And wilful masking of the simple truth,
To deem the stoutest heart and wisest head
Of all our countrymen a slave to lust
Of lucre ; one whose instincts fitted him
Better to chaffer o'er a sheep or steer,
Or price a bunch of potherbs, jar of wine,
Than handle kingly matters ; one whose arts
Lowborn and base dishonour'd lofty station.
But most I sought to kindle and to fan
The fiery heats of pride ; for in the blaze
Of that unruly passion man is blind,
Swerves from his constant motions, and disowns
The fixed conclusions of habitual reason,
Nor sees the heavenborn light of his own soul,
More than the dazzled eye the shape of things.
I shamed them by reproaches and reproofs,
And flatteries of their old nobility,
To gnash their teeth against him ; till they all
With one consent made me their chief of war ;
Till, from a whisper'd breath of slander, grew
A thundercloud that shook the isle. By stealth
The arm'd retainers of my house and theirs
Grew to a host ; we thought he knew not of it ;
And in our madness risk'd our all. We met :
And one long day the valleys and the hills
Echoed the wacry ; but wise Pittacus
Had mapp'd the conflict in his chamber, ere

The bands encounter'd ; and his skill forestall'd
Our hasty motions ; few were wounded, fewer
Slain, and the day was his. When it was done,
He sent a herald who spoke fair the crowd
Of the discomfited, and with brief words,
Kind arts, and promises of grace drew off
The disaffected, or who seem'd as such,
Because they did the bidding of their lords.
And we were taken, and disarm'd ; the end
Came, not by death, or chains, but in a voice
So mild, dispassionate, deliberate,
It seem'd to speak to us of things to come,
As tho' they were the past ; so long had he
Foreseen the issue of those words of his,
Spoken in thine ear when I was lying low
In the next chamber wounded, and perchance,
Ye thought, not like to live. 'Depart,' he said ;
'I thirst not for the blood of men, who once
Were friends, nor seal ye as my foes by death.
We shall not meet again, except it be
Among the shadows of the dead ; and then,
When all is memory only, ye will think
I was not what ye deem'd me, and once more
We may be friends' : and turning unto me,
With this last word ; 'Alcæus, know thyself ;
Till this, the greatest work that man can do,
Be done, all other tasks are vain' : and then
He left us to the scorn of our own souls,
And to that bitter thought that all was lost."

XIV

Then after a long silence Sappho spoke ;—
 “ I marvel that within thy memory dwell
 Words that I have forgotten many a year.
 Yet it is well that thou canst mind me of them.
 And, if the words come back to me, the truth
 Shall not be hidden from thee, aged friend ;
 For if wild fancies have possess'd thy soul
 It must bring peace.” Alcæus answer'd her :
 “ When the two voices in the chamber ceased
 Softly I heard him rise up and pass out,
 And thou wert left alone ; after a while
 Thou saidst ‘ *How could I tell him what I felt ?
 Tho', when he gives me to another thus,
 'Twere time to unfold my secret. Oh ! 'tis past.
 My lonely rapture shall not be unveil'd,
 But casketed, like some too precious gem,
 Which to be seen might tempt untoward hands
 To rudely handle it ; oh ! all is past.
 I know not, now he is no longer here,
 I know not if he were a God or man
 So glorious more than others ; if I spoke,
 Pittacus would but wonder, or deride ,
 Yet not deride, for he is mercy's self.
 Or ply such counsel as would make me feel
 For ever after lesser than myself ;
 And I could never meet him, or behold
 In those calm eyes the thought that I am mad*

To say such words.' I heard thee say such words.
And tho' Death stands between us and that man,
And beckons us to follow, still this heart
Oft as it hearkens the remember'd sound
Echoes the deathful throb that shook me then !"
He ceased ; and Sappho, with a smile, as sad
As the last glimmer of a wintry sun :—
“ There are some moments in this life of ours
When the Gods pour into the heart of man
Phantasy, that like to fiery wine
Dazzles the sense, until it sees all things
Thro' golden ethers ; and so wings the soul,
That, what the eye looks on, the spirit lifts
Into a very heaven ; and so this world,
The old familiar nature, clothes itself
With sudden and great light ; this weary life,
This grey monotony of daily acts,
Changes, as mountains under shadowing cloud,
That flood with warmth and music in the sun.
And so the spells of that enchantment strong
Transform the shapes and aspects of mere men
To semblance of the Gods. And thus it was,
One day, with me, as I went forth at morn
Along the shore, rejoicing in my youth,
And singing to myself, as tho' that joy,
Fearless and strong, were immortality.
Like the great sun undimm'd at dawn, but doom'd
To drown in sudden thunders, that same hour
My joy was changed to sorrow ; that same hour

Came lightnings out against me, and I saw,
Or thought I saw, a son of the high Gods
Step on the sands, who held me in his thrall,
Till I went mad : 'tis o'er, I know no more ;
Ev'n memory fails me ; I should strive in vain
To tell thee more than this ; between that day
And this the Furies hover'd, and cast down
Great darkness on me, and have hid from me
The glory of it, like a misty sun
Whose half is blotted out. Ah me ! I know not,
I know not now, if what I tell to thee
Have so much actual in it as might serve
For something of a stem round which might climb
The leaves and tendrils of the eager vine
Of phantasy ; substantial truth enough
To feed the quick flame of a poet's love ;
Or whether it were not in very sooth
One of those clearer visions of the night,
That haunt us strangely, ev'n at noon of day,
And after many years, until they seem
Familiar as the story of our lives.
I know not now ; and so can speak to thee—
If this were actual reality—
As though I sang unto thee a true tale
So wreathed with fancies I forget the facts ;
If it were not, as though I told a dream
Told me so well I deem it living-true.
And those far words, my own forgotten words,
Burning, as 'twere some lamp within a tomb,

Deep in thy memory, tho' not in mine,
Old friend, were utter'd without thought of him,
By me, unworthy of him, our first man ;
Utter'd of that fair vision, god or man,
Or phantom only ; thou hast heard my tale.”
And, as she told him that weird tale of love—
Not all, but the one fragment that still shone
Like a star through a cleft of cloud—she spoke
In low sad tones dispassionate, as though
She brought out toys or pictures she had loved
In infancy, and clapt her hands to see,
And show'd them now unto another child.
And, sooth to say, that wanderer full of woes
Had leant his ear, like to a very child
To listen to her voice. Sometimes she paused,
And seem'd to hearken, as tho' she might hear
Some whisper ; hid her eyes behind her hand,
As tho' she might wake up some vision lost.
And then she shook her grey locks, and she sigh'd,
As one who cannot charm back into life
Ashes and dust that once were beautiful.
How strange it seem'd to him, how mournful-strange !
He wonder'd now to look upon himself,
So changed since she had spoken : where was he,
Lash'd by the Furies over sea and land,
Believing his own madness to be true,
As Sappho her love-dream ? And where was he,
The guiltless sage, who had provoked the wrath,
That burnt through a whole life ? And what was now

The worth of truth itself to them, whose steps,
So far down in the valley of grey Death,
Can never turn again? “Ah me!” he thought;
“Sure, if the Gods that rule o’er mortal life
Have pity for our sorrows, and our sins,
Methinks they might forgive the yearning prayer,
‘O! to live over some few years again,
That I might sail in sunlight, and soft air,
My bark flung on the rocks thro’ mist and cloud!’”
Once more she spoke: “See, I have told thee all
That I have power to tell, scant though it be.
For fear, or shame, that might have stay’d me once,
Are vanish’d, as a meteor of the dawn;
And I am old, and nothing shakes me now;
And we are nigh to darkness evermore,
When all the voices of this evil world
Will be less than the falling of a leaf;
And other hopes, and other cares have held
My heart long years, and that more constant flame,
That kindles from a little spark at first,
But burns for ever; not the fiery sword
That cleaves the heart, and when it passes out
Leaves ashes only. These two loves at last—
Differing, as stormy morn, and peaceful even—
Are memories only; neither now can stab
Thy heart with jealous hate; and he, the wise
Who, while he lived, dealt thee imagined wrong,
Waits thee among the shadows; all are gone.
And we may join together with one voice,

To honour him who was the first of men,
Although he was not loved by me or thee.
And he, the patient and strong-hearted man,
I learnt to cherish with that better love,
That is the perfect flower of womanhood,
That links less sense to sense than soul to soul,
He too is gone for ever ! Even Kleis,
My little Kleis that was, is far away
From her own land with dear ones of her own,
All but this girl, her first-born, who, like her,
In beauty and in sweetness minds me of her,
Young Kleis, Kleis of my Kleis, who brings back to me
My Kleis when she was young. She too will part,
Ere I part from her, for her sire will come,
And bear her from me, if she wed not one
Of our own countrymen, and make her home
Among us :” “ Fear not,” then Alcæus said ;
“ O Sappho, surely she shall wed the boy,
My brother’s heir ; for I have mark’d them both ;
And ere their tongues gave utterance to their hopes,
Their hearts flew thro’ their eyes ; I saw the sign.
And if I saw not, still am I a seer,
And see what shall be, if I have not seen.
For, if they love not now, yet shall they love ;
And, if they love now, they shall love the more.
For he is valiant as his father was,
And bears his mother’s image on his face ;
And she hath the rare beauty of a Muse ;
Her eyes inherit the deep love of thine,

Her virgin voice the music of thy songs.
So our lost loves that wander'd far apart,
And never found a resting-place on earth,
At last shall meet together in these two,
Their kindred hearts shall be a home to ours."

XV

Again they met by moonlight, he and she,
The aged minstrels, and discoursed again
Of the old days : again Alcæus said ;—
" I promised thee the story of my past
Since last I saw thee ; but 'tis little worth,
When separate from the motions of my soul,
The ceaseless ebb and flow of hopes and fears,
Prides and regrets. So, after those last words
Of Pittacus, all just and merciful,
I stood, as one who finds himself alone
In utter darkness, after the last flash
Of stormy night. Next day at break of dawn
I pass'd aboard, my hand before my eyes,
As one who would not bear the sun of heaven
To mock at his despair, and childish tears.
Once more, once more, O Sappho, the white sail
Flies in the wind, the billow from the prow.
The shores and mountains of my native isle
Vanish behind, seen dimly thro' my tears.
Once more my wild hopes have been wither'd up ;
Once more my pride hath broke its eagle wing,

Our glory drags its plumage in the dust.
My friends in evil fortune—the best men
And noblest in the land—are here with me ;
And to forget myself and my despair
I stand with folded arms to look on them,
And make a mournful pastime for my soul
In noting the strange humours and diverse
Aspects of one despair. Some loth to leave
Their loves, and their delights, and bid farewell
To their souls' idols, weep and curse by turns.
Some peer with dark eyes into the dark sea,
As though, once underneath the sunlit waves,
At least they would be nearer the loved land
Whence they are driven, and feel no sense of pain.
Some drown all bitter thoughts in biting jests ;
And some with golden flagons of Methymna,
Like the sweet blood out of their island's heart,
Would fain light up brief sunshine in their own ;
And stay that Lesbian nectar on their tongues
With tender joy, as tho' they thus prolong'd
The blissful savour of the happy days
Sped in the happy valleys, whence it came,
Which they shall taste no more. And every drop
Brings back some living picture to their hearts
Of its green vineyards, lawns, and waving hills,
And takes them back unto the past of youth ;
And fancy, love, and glory, feast and song,
Stand on the grey cloud of adversity,
An Iris of all colours. I am still,

Because my lips refuse to utter half
The fulness of my heart. Then suddenly
I seem'd to lose all sense of outward things ;
The voices, and the faces of the rest
Were hidden from me, as tho' sleep had veil'd
The sea, and sky, and islands ; with a cry
I stretch'd my hands, as tho' my well-loved friend,
My Melanippus stood before me there,
And I spoke to him then : ' O days of youth !
O days of promise ! I shall see no more,
And thou, O early friend, whose gentle heart
Was ever faithful to thy poor Alcæus,
Tho' little worth that love ; on whom I lean'd
In grief and joy ; who ever gav'st me back,
For spleens, regrets, remorse, raptures, fears,
Those quiet words of counsel, and of comfort,
Refreshing to this fever'd heart of mine
As evergreen, and ever-fragrant leaves,
When all the crimson roses of the year
Are fall'n and scatter'd ; tho' we met not oft.
I joy'd in tumult, and the fiery speed
Of rapturous moments ; but, whene'er we met,
Thine eyes were as the ever-fixed stars,
Which bring us into deeper meditations,
When the great sun is sunken in the west,
Than all the proud magnificence of noon.
Thy words were as the virgin spring, whose voice,
That still small voice, lives in the wilderness.
O Melanippus, how fill up the dark

Of being without hope—that frozen calm
Which is not peace—my tablets I will take,
And write, as on a pale cold sepulchre,
The evil records of those latter days
Of passions and of pains, which, gone and fled,
Seem, in this twilight of confused thoughts,
And purposeless despondency, as strange
As the remembrance of a stormy morn
In the hush'd gloom of even. Long ago
I told thee of my envy and my pride ;
And pour'd my lawless thoughts into thine ears,
Receiving back the wisdom of the just
For answer ; and the earnest love of one,
Who sought my honour as a part of his.
Oh ! that I had but listen'd to those words
Patiently ! oh ! that I had never striven,
Rebellious as a fierce and thirsty flame,
Against the solid adamant of truth.
Oh ! would that I had listen'd and obey'd,
For now I should not be a wanderer !
Till when ? and where ? Alas ! my heart is blind,
As are my weeping eyes ! O friend, I know not,
And cannot paint, the future ev'n in dream ;
Whilst thou perchance, out of thy mountain home,
Green refuge blest, and thro' the bloomed boughs
Of thy rose-laurels blowing softly, seest
This parting sail with every moment less.
Ah ! if thou breathest hopeless sighs for me,
My follies and my frenzies, still forget not

One who forgets not thee, my Melanippus.
It may betide, my friend, that this lorn scroll
May never reach thine eyes ; but if it do,
Thou wilt be sure that I have blotted out
All puny fears, all lean self-loves, reserves ;
And only see myself as I am seen.
Once more, O friend of youth, once more farewell,
Perchance for ever ; exiled I depart
Weigh'd down less by the arrows of my foes
Than by my own dishonour ; how is shame,
The ignominy of self-damning thoughts,
To be removed for ever ? Will great deeds
Wash out the stains of wilful guilt ? Can honour
Atone for shame ? The Future for the Past ?
Alas ! where may I flee, where shall great deeds
Henceforth be done ? My own dear land shall see me
No more for ever, or listen to my voice,
Or hear ev'n of my deeds. And strength of arm,
Or might of spirit, put forth in the sight
Of strangers, when already years have writ
Their pictures, and their shadows on the heart,
Ev'n could we put them forth, when that sad heart
Burns low with wasted efforts, and the arm
Is wither'd with the pitiless frosts of Time,
Are but as flickering fires blown on by winds
Of Winter, not the noonday glory, welcom'd
By glad eyes, and a thousand happy hearts
And living tongues of well-beloved friends.
Ah me ! 'tis only solitary tears

Can cleanse the heart gnaw'd by remorseful pains,
Till Death, that comes to all, comes doubly welcome
Unto its weariness. And even now
Methinks this heart is dead ; no future passion
Shall fill its hollow calm, no rapturous moment
Expand it as of old, and lift it up
Above the evil day, and passing cloud.
Ev'n hope, the star that follows the sunk sun,
Shall set, and leave it in the gloomy hush
Of apathy's cold night. Alas ! alas !
For he, who fights with justice and the just,
Fights with the Gods, who turn his strength, and counsels
Against himself, and make him his own fate.
This have I done ; and envy, like a dream,
That starts the troubled dreamer from his bed,
Led me with shut eyes, and with naked feet
O'er perilous ridges, over starless roofs,
And when I wake, I find that I am fallen
And creep away, wounded and wondering.
My eyes are open'd, and the Fates have drawn
The curtains of my soul, and shown me there
Dark mystery within of prides and hates,
So that from mine own presence I recoil
As from an outward horror ! O my friend ;
Time, whose swift plumes are never swift enough
To youth, and hot ambition, when we lie
Under a load of our own evil deeds,
Seems all too slow, as to a wounded man,
Whose racked moments are alive with pain,

And in their agony dilate and grow
To days, and months, and years ; yet even then
I pray him still to linger in his flight
That I may feel once more some touch of peace,
Ere I go down unto the twilight shores,
Where wretched ghosts are wailing. Let me live
Till I have wept enough to cleanse away
The bitterness that eats into my heart ;
Or until memory, in the deeps of age,
Loses the shape and substance of midlife,
And only o'er the torrent of those years
Sees the green shores of Youth. And then come death,
And not till then ; that I may not lament,
Whatever penal fines await me then,
That I have died too soon. I warr'd in vain ;
I warr'd against the Gods. I warr'd with Right,
And that just man, whom the according tongues
Of a whole people throned and look'd unto,
As to a fixed sun ; I have done ill.
But he shall never hear that I have named him
Henceforth with slanderous words, or breath of scorn,
Or made his virtues look like hunchback'd dwarfs
In the thwart lens of envy ; twisted words
Of wisdom, till they seem'd as foolishness.
But, in whatever lands henceforth I tread,
Though he may hear no more of me, my voice
Shall pay him back the debt of gratitude,
The sumless debt of gratitude for life ;
That men may know that better men than I,

Proud restless heart, grow under Lesbian suns.
One man at least is there, who in his soul
Together binds together all men's virtues,
Knowledge, and fancy, modesty, and strength,
Love without fear, and wisdom without scorn.
This, Melanippus, might seem strange to thee,
And thou wouldst say ; Is our Alcæus mad ;
Or hath some great enchantment wrought this change
On pride, and fury, and the thirst of power ?
Strange it may seem, but it is even true.
Yes, I am changed ; but not the thought alone
Of wasted years, and disappointed hopes,
Ambitions quench'd, humiliations borne,
And boastful strength turn'd into impotence,
Have made me thus. No, friend, thou know'st enough
Of sad Alcæus, to know this at least,
That, as a raging flame will hiss and roar
Against the pouring clouds, and burst again
To tenfold fierceness after, so with me,
Disaster, suffering, wounded vanities,
And public scorn, ev'n retributions just,
Kindled but to a more concentred heat
This savage heart of mine. Bear with me, Sappho.
Stript naked, and become a common mark,
I should the more defy the vulgar eyes
Of little hates ; and, coil'd up in disdain,
Die as the scorpion pierced with its own sting ;
But never yield to natures less than mine.
Than mine ! What was it work'd this wondrous change ?

Thou art my friend ; to thee I may confess,
'Twas not the arms, nor arts of Pittacus,
Nor common voice of men, nor common sense,
That might not stint the honour due to him ;
'Twas not his power that conquer'd this ill soul.
No ! no ! 'twas something they had never dream'd,
Stronger than thunderbolt, or adamant,
An old familiar word, a homely virtue,
And little thought of in this fiery time ;
'Twas kindness, lovingkindness !' Thus I wail'd,
And murmur'd, seeking shadowy silence most,
As though apart I spoke unto my friend,
As though he heard me, and could answer me.
But when I look'd up in the light again,
I saw no more the fair home of my friend ;
The mountains lay beneath the purple sea. ✓

MILETUS

I

“BE sure it was Miletus that I sought
Before all other haunts ; for there I knew
Were many friends and true ; there, boy or man,
Full oft I linger’d days and weeks, and gazed
With wonder on its wealth, and gorgeous shows,
And divers pastimes. There in her own home
Dwelt Anaktoria ; for her sire was dead ;
And she walk’d in her palace halls alone.
’Twas so I dreamt. At even, as I stood
Beneath the portico by open doors,
I heard a sound, as of a festival,
And music wafted from within ; and one
Came forward whom I question’d ; and he said ;—
‘ Know’st thou not ’tis a bridal ? That the queen
Of beauty wedded was this very morn
To one of eastern fame, a Lesbian man,
And yet a man of war, of noble race ?
Know’st thou his name ? ’Tis Antimenidas,
A brother of the bard whose songs are sung

Ofttimes beneath this roof :’ and, as he spoke,
I heard the very hymeneal hymn
That I had writ erewhile, long since forgot,
And hid away beneath the daily dust
Of many cares and memories of pain.
I stood awhile to listen to that song,
And sigh’d to think what other moods had ruled
My spirit when I wrote it. Then I pass’d
Swiftly beyond the vestibule, and found
Many among a goodly company,
Who hail’d, and welcomed me ; and foremost she,
Link’d to the swordarm of the warrior bold,
Whose last and veriest triumph was that heart,
That had escaped from all the silken toils
Of feebler hunters, all the blandishments
Of the highborn and comely, golden showers
Of city merchants, minstrels, artists, lords
Of matter and of mind ; and felt its pride
A captive to the strength that was not hers,
That ruled o’er men, as she o’er women won
A matchless victory. She laugh’d, and said ;—
‘ If Citharus bore off a low-voiced bride,
It was that he might lead her gently on,
Gentle himself ; what had he done with me ?
And yet I shall not be a rebel more
Than she (whom I remember good and true),
If she shall clothe her nature with the strength
Of will, that lay conceal’d beneath the grace

Of him her model. One who ruled himself,
Before he headed armies, shall be mine !'

II

The selfsame night, when all the guests were gone,
I bade my brother tell me of those wars
By Babylon ; and how he won his prize,
That ivory-hilted scimitar, that made
All other weapons in my armoury
Playthings for children, and which he drew forth
That mournful midnight when our feast was broken,
And Myrsilus fell dead. 'To thee,' he said,
'Who know'st I would not breed myself selfscorn,
By boasting of myself, I may relate
How that befell. Thou mayst remember well,
O brother, how in early days we sat,
And held long converse under boughs at noon ;
Or in the moonlight, wandering by the shore
Of the great sea, and listening to its sound.
I too remember thine own words, 'It seems
They tell a tale of other lands to us,
And to those lands they sing of ours ;' 'Ah me !'
I said, 'if I could wander free as they,
And look upon the cities which they lave,
And touch the shores of Afric, and look up
At the immortal marvels of that land
Of Egypt ; pass beyond the utmost gates
Of the known world ; or inland see the walls

Of Babylon—and well I seem to see
What I have heard from others, men who come,
And pass, and come no more—I should have won,
Methinks, a crown of memories, worth the weight
Of all thy silent fancies, tho' they be
Fresh-springing flowers, while those are but the leaves
Shed by the parted Summer.' So since last
We met, I went forth fix'd in that resolve ;
And, passing by the Troad, first beheld
The skeleton of the great capital
Cold, still, all but the many winds that blew
The dust of ages o'er its crazed towers,
And ashes of the burning. Here and there
The song of fishers, spreading in the sun
Their nets before the huts, built underneath
The vast grey walls, mix'd with the ancient cry
Of the wild fowl that hover o'er the plain,
And haunt the streams as in the days of old.
Days, weeks, and weary months I made my way
Down through Assyria ; and, from men I met
Of my own language, evil things I heard,
That constant rumours, as a gathering gloom
Of thunders, spread thro' all that troubled realm ;
That it would be divided, and become
A spoil of nations from the south, and now
The end was nigh. The tempest in mine ears,
I pass into the Babylonian plain,
Mesopotamia, where another cry
Made me deaf to the first ; for now it was

Great Nabuchodonosor rising up
Against the Egyptian King, fullarm'd to grasp
His portion of forlorn Assyria,
And strive for it with warlike Babylon.
Since I had listen'd to that old man's tale,
The faithful warrior from the streams of Nile,
My heart was set against the Egyptian King ;
And, rather than win honour under him,
Even could I foreknow that he would win,
Would choose to be defeated with his foes.
I held my way along the river plain ;
And first beheld the palm imperial,
Towering above the lesser growths, as King
Nabuchodonosor o'er the world ;
And marvell'd at the abundance, seldom found
Under our paler sun ; the brighter fruits
And darker leafage ; and the dusky brows
And swart limbs of the thronging habitants.
The cities mirror'd in so vast a stream
It seem'd a flowing sea ; but, as I near'd
The famous capital, and, thro' the dust,
And o'er the heads of castled elephants—
Enormous, unimaginable shapes
Of sumless strengths, impregnable to arms—
Saw its vast spaces, and the ascending steps
Of its great temple, making all things less,
Ev'n towers and palaces ; and, with the crowd
Of chariots and of horsemen, pass'd beneath
One of its gates within the massy walls

Unscaleable ; methought, it was not least
Of mortal honours to be least among
The warriors of so great a king, and strive
More sure of victory under him supreme,
And the strong will that ruled from such a throne,
Than if I led without him all his men.
And, if I lifted up my eyes above
The host that flooded thro' the open gates,
I saw, far up along the shadowing walls,
Swift crowds that cross'd each other ; and I heard
The noise of rolling cars, and neighing steeds
Tossing their heads into the light, and saw
The sheen of arms and banners ; and there rose
A sound of shawms and sackbuts, and all kinds
Of music ; for the king was passing by.
And all the multitude about me stood
Fix'd in a mute astonishment, and all
Bow'd down their heads in awe ; all day, 'twas said,
The bands of the imperial army flow'd
Along the walls, and the sun smote their arms,
As when it trembles on a running stream
Dazzling the sight. There the great king sat throned
To look upon them, and behold at once
The countless warriors that upheld his power,
And the vast city spread out underneath.

III

It boots not now to weary thee with words,
That tell of weary hours pass'd in the courts
Of chiefs, and nobles ; low obeisances,
To win a moment's glance of grace, forgot
As soon as given ; of honey'd words that taste
Bitter in memory, forceful flatteries
That leave the pale lips writhing with a curse,
And hateful smiles that wither to a sneer.
Till one who was a man of war himself,
And cast a soldier's eye upon the form
Of one who, like himself, was tall and strong,
Earnest of prowess ; and he whisper'd one,
Who bore it onward to a higher lord,
Who bore it to the king : so I took rank
Among the captains of his host. No more
I seek to weary thee with many words,
That tell of toilsome days, and wakeful nights,
Of march, and countermarch ; of victory won
Over the driven foe, nights of alarm,
Encampments lifted suddenly, surprise,
Repulse, recover'd triumph ; till at length
We lay in tents beside the river-stream
In front of Carchemish ; the Egyptian host,
Routed, had fled the plain, and refuge sought
Behind the walls ; and, while we slowly moved
Our battering engines, rain of arrows shower'd
And slew our men ; oft as our warriors fell

They shouted from the battlements, and stirr'd
Our souls with scorn. At last we saw a man
Of mighty stature, head and shoulders higher
Than all the host ; a starless night he seem'd,
But for the fiery eyes within his head,
A son of Afric ; yet from whence he came
No man could tell. Of massy might, he seem'd
Dark Aidoneus, King of Erebus,
Come up for hate not love into the light.
With a great voice he shouted ; by him stood
A herald, who interpreted his speech
In divers tongues ; he laugh'd, and ' Come, ' he cried.
' Ye strive in vain ; come nigh, if ye be men ;
I challenge ye to fight, but not with arms.
Send me your lithest wrestlers, men of skill
To grasp, and grapple, and by strength of limb,
Tho' less by strength of limb than tricks of art,
To overthrow ; and I will wager ye
My single life against a host of ye ;
Although I make no boast of any worth,
Save that which Nature gave me, strength alone
To break through all your sleights like bands of straw ;
That not a man of all your chiefs shall stand
Against me ; and mark this, if he falls he dies ;
And if I fail, oh ! ye may take my head !'
A truce proclaim'd, seven Babylonian men
Stood forward of the craftiest, each man skill'd
To bear to earth, by nimble motions join'd
To stalwart strength, a mightier than himself

Less crafty in his art. But when I saw
The dismal giant pass into the midst,
Between the city and our host, it seem'd
As though each Babylonian held himself
Too frail to dare such conflict ; and they stood
Motionless for a brief space. Then the king
Commanded that their valour should be spurr'd
By warlike music ; and the sound arose
Of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and
All kinds of music ; suddenly each man,
Shamed into action by the other six
Standing beside him, hastened, and they pass'd
In single file ; and then the foremost closed
With his vast adversary. Soon they found
His simple speech and feigned lack of skill
Was but a mockery, for the art disclaim'd
Was rival of his strength ; and so they fell
O'ermatch'd ; and, as they fell, he took the sword
That he had laid aside, and one by one
He slew them ere they rose ; by that same arm
Was the huge ivory-hilted scimitar
Held o'er the throne of Myrsilus that night
Before the war with Athens. The great king,
From under his pavilion, saw that sight ;
And, waxing wroth, call'd for his chiefs of war,
And held a council ; and his words of scorn
Were sharper to them than the Ethiop's blade.
And then he bad a herald thro' the ranks
Proclaim, that whosoe'er of any race,

Assyrian, Babylonian, Mede, or Greek,
Could vanquish the swart giant, should possess
A chain of gold about his neck, and take
One of the fairest daughters of the land
To wife. I heard it, and a sudden thought
Tempted me to the trial ; for I knew
That I had won in the palestra oft,
In days before, by a particular stroke
Known only to myself, an elbow-thrust,
That when mine adversary was inclined
Forward, in act to throw me, struck his side
With such a thrilling keenness, that his strength,
How great soe'er, grew faint, and he was fain
To writhe himself contrariwise ; and so
He gave me the occasion that I sought,
And snatch'd so swiftly, that he fell at once ;
And I remember'd that I never fail'd.
Ev'n then, in sight of all men, to myself
I whisper'd, 'Tis too much ; and I have dared
A deed too bold for any sober man ;
What Fury drives me to it ?' Then I pray'd,
And a new spirit whisper'd into me ;—
'What ! wilt thou cast off manhood ? Wilt thou fly,
And forfeit, not the honours of the king,
The chain of gold, and the fair maid,—for these
Are nought to thee, and specially the last,
And Anaktoria knows the reason why—
But all the strength that self-approval brings,
The meed of thine own soul ? And, shouldst thou fly,

Will Nabuchodonosor spare the life
Of one poor Greek who thought to save it thus,
Nor rather make thee a burnt-offering
To his own Gods, as he is wont to do ?'
It seem'd as tho' the helmed Pallas stood
Beside me, uttering, ' Strive for Greece, and win,
For I will aid thee !' Then I raised my head ;
And strode straight on to death or victory,
While yet the jeers of those whose comrades fell
Were hissing in mine ears. I ran upon him,
And let the dark man clasp me in his arms,
While mine were free ; but in a moment more,
So swift was the dread venture, as he stoop'd,
And sought to sway me with his bulk alone,
The fatal thrust was dealt, and he recoil'd
As though a serpent fang shot through his blood,
A swift and mortal poison ; as he lay
Still binding me with unrelaxing arms,
So that my ribs bent inward to their might,
My hands were on his gorge, and all my strength
Methinks, redoubled by a power unseen.
And, as a dungeon whose foundations fail,
I felt the prison of those iron arms
Lapse slowly downward, and the life depart
That was so surely to have compass'd mine.
Then up I leapt, and seizing the great sword
In both my arms, I sever'd the dark head
Whose bloodred eyes, fierce signals of the hate
Of one, who feels himself subdued at last

By him he had disdain'd, were fix'd on me
Ev'n after death ; the horror haunts me still !
And, when I lifted up the head, a shout
Rose from the Babylonians, less forsooth
In honour of the deed done by a Greek,
Than that my arm avenged them ; and the king
Call'd me into his tent ; and thro' the array
Of judges, captains, counsellors, I pass'd
Up to the throne. And if they look'd askance,
With evil eye on one who came from far,
When I had cast myself before the king,
He bade me rise, call'd for his treasurer,
And bade him hang the chain about my neck.
And for the damsel—' Know,' I said, ' O king,
That when the war is ended, I shall haste—
With warranty thereto vouchsafed by thee—
Back to my own land, where another waits
My coming ; and why should I wound her heart
By such disloyalty, made tenfold more
By showing her one born in this fair clime,
More beautiful than any maid of ours ?
(And yet, in truth, I would not vex this one
By showing her the beauty of my own.)
Why make an exile of some happy girl
Whose eyes might favour some far better man ?
But I will keep with thy consent, O king,
The weapon that hath slain so many men,
In token of the deed that I have done,
And memory of these wars, O king of kings !'

Said Nabuchodonosor, ' Be it so.'
And I went out in wonder at myself
That, after such grave perils, still I lived.
But, as I went forth, a new terror drew
All eyes upon it. From the city rose
Smoke mix'd with flame, and uproar from within ;
And from the walls and battlements withdrew
The Egyptian armament, and left but few
To meet our onset ; the ill-guarded gates
Were forced ; and thro' the doomed city ran
The Babylonians eager for the spoil.
And the swift fire, as hungry as the sword,
Took its own share, while palaces and towers,
Seen for a while above the cloud and flame,
Went down with thunder, and both friend and foe
Were lost together as the city fell.'

IV

From this fair home, after long tarrying there,
Drinking rare memories in, and fancies new,
And weaving them to song, I shipp'd at last
For the mainland of Hellas ; and thereon
For many a year I linger'd, and well nigh
Forgot my own Æolic tongues in theirs.
Honour and welcome from their foremost men
Awaited me, and hospitable homes
Were open to receive me ; noble chiefs
And men of wealth repaid my ready songs

With lavish gold ; and, wheresoe'er I went,
Fame had gone on before me, and prepared
A dwelling for me. But my restless muse,
Full oft impatient of the shadow cast
By city walls, sought sunshine, and the breath
Of vineyards, and the carol of the brooks,
That wander'd thro' lone valleys, and the voice
Of the oak forest on the mountain slope.
And more than all, when gusty Fortune veer'd,
And ragged raiment shamed me from the doors
Of prosperous men, I shunn'd the haunts of pride.
So, in the days of youth, when I was strong,
I loved to go from land to land, from isle
To isle, from seaward dale to mountainpeak,
From the great city to the hamlet wild,
With scrip and staff, and rough Molossian dog,
And nought beside ; tho' many a day scant fare
Befell me, sometimes none. I blest the Gods
Who gave me mirth, and strength, and joy of heart,
And fared right onward. With my songs I smooth'd
The rough way up the steep, or by the shore ;
And laid me down at sunset under shade
Of some great rock, o'er which the landwind blew,
Rustling among the heather, the wild thyme,
And furze, to be awaken'd by the bleat
Of the wild goat ; or in a murmuring cave,
That open'd on the ribbed shore and shells,
And took the whispers of the waves, that rimm'd
The hot white sands with pearly bubbles clear ;

Or by the ragged roots of lonely pines,
That moan'd me to my rest. But when the days
Were brown with Autumn, and the viny ways,
And hillside slopes, were ringing with the mirth
Of village vintagers, I laid me down
Amid the ancient men beside the spring ;
Who gave me gladly of their flask to drink,
Their barley bannock, and fresh-gather'd fruits ;
And saw afar and near the busy time
Of pleasant toils ; and listen'd to the charm
Of country ditties answering one another,
From dale and upland, till the sun went down
Behind the dark hill overhead, and threw
Its gold on wood, and tower, and purple isle,
And 'twixt the cypress shadows ; and I heard
From living lips the stories of their lives,
Their loves and hates, their passions and their pains,
Wrongs and revenges. Many a time and oft,
Hopes, purposes, were whisper'd in mine ear
That to a native had been secret still.
But I was but a wind that whirls the leaves
Now here, now there ; they knew not whence I came,
Nor whither went ; they had no fear of me ;
They gave me welcome, and plain cheer, and took
For meed my wild adventures ; and a weight
Was lifted from their hearts, opprest with care,
And penury, oft as I in simple song
Told them of wonders I had heard and seen.
For they were fain to hear of others' haps,

And dreamt not that I bore away their own
For the like uses, when betwixt us lay
Mountains and seas ; and yet I did not play
The traitor to them for their bounty ; no,
But under other names, with tricks of art,
I served them up ; so that I sometimes brought
The selfsame accidents back to their ears
Who first did make them known to me, so wrought
With variation, that they scarce might know
Their own again ; and they would stare and laugh,
Or weep the more to hear of that akin
To their own weal or woe. Sometimes I met
A brother wanderer like myself ; and then,
Like weary pedlars laying down our packs,
We show'd our several wealth unto each other ;
We made each other merry with our tales,
And borrow'd of each other, as we lay,
At noontide under shade of oak or plane,
On mountain green ; or by a runnel swift
And bright, that gush'd from alpine cave hard by,
And fed the valleys from its breasts of snow,
And rush'd through arched rose, and tamarisk,
And April asphodels that lit the fields.
Ah ! then my poverty and merry heart
Stood as a panoply against the shafts
Of Fortune ; and she turn'd away and laugh'd
To see her random arrows blown aside,
Or given back to her with their broken points.
For sometimes, in the homeless silent wastes

Of the high mountains, armed men came forth,
And with wild words, and frowns, and threatening hands
Uplifted, bade me give them gold ; and, baulk'd
Of their unlawful purpose,—for I own'd
No more of this world's treasures than the blithe
Midsummer grasshopper, that wings from shade
To shade, and sings,—they dragg'd me unresisting
Into their secret cavern, with resolve
To avenge my guilty want upon myself.
But when they saw that all I had was theirs,
My songs, and many tales, and mirthful mood,
Like lions fronted by bold innocence,
They bated their brave speech, and let me lead
Their reckless spirits as I will'd, and took
The impress of my fancy ; and themselves
Shouted and laugh'd, and clapp'd their hands, and made
Deep chorus to my minstrelsy, that shook
The vaulted darkness, and roll'd back again
In monstrous echoes ; while the bloodred flame
Smote on the jagged faces of the rocks,
Making them glare and grin, like giants waked
From centenary slumbers. And when wine
Had lit a fire within them, and made bold
Their thwart and crimson consciences, they told
The stories of their many evil deeds,
Their sleepless nights of lawless hopes, their days
Of broken slumbers, vex'd with noonday fears,
Swift shadows dropt from tempest-ridden clouds,
Their stealthy and hush'd onslaughts under screen

Of moonless darkness, and the alarmed cry
Of consternation, choked in blood ; with flight
Of trembling women through o'erhanging fires,
Their children clinging to them, from the gleam
Of naked iron, as the spoilers strode,
Laden with wealth, across their murder'd sires.
And when their dreadful jollity had ceased,
And they sank down in slumber by the fire,
And in the cavern every sound was hush'd,
Saving at intervals a curse, or groan
Mutter'd in dream, or hissing of the pine
Piled on the coals, or bursting of its sparks,
In silence I arose, and took my way
Forth from the robbers' hold, and swiftly trod
The winding way into the plain again ;
Thanking the Gods, that, if my lot was poor,
I could not envy them, altho' they pour'd
The rich man's vintage into his gold cup
Rifed when he was slain, and cushion'd them
On his Egyptian purples. Better drink
The brackish spring in singleness of heart,
Than, with the blessed Samian at your lips,
Turn round, affray'd at shadows ! So I fared,
Till the kind hand of some old islander,
Friend to us both, brought me from the kind heart
Of Citharus fond words utter'd years ago,
And from his bosom drew forth a worn scroll
Pale as a sere leaf, and from laden chest
A welcome store of Lesbian gifts and gold.

One day I found myself upon the shore
Of Troas once again, and heard the waves
Mourn in the solitude, and saw the wind
Scatter the dust of Ilium ; and the songs
Of old Mæonides began to sound
Within me, and a yearning seized on me
To visit the near isle where he was born.
The passion of my boyhood stirr'd again.
I wonder'd then how any lesser thoughts
Could have so dimm'd into forgetfulness
That hope so early cherish'd, ' Ere I die
I will look on that cradle of renown.'

CHIOS

I

WE used to think of him, as of a man
Nobler in stature than the sons of men,
When men were nobler ; with a brow, between
His flowing hair, like morning from beneath
The unfolding clouds ; we never dared to bring
Each holy feature into likeness clear
Of common visible humanity ;
Or shape the foldings of his robe, or hear
Aught in his musical, imagined voice,
Aught more familiar than the mystic tones,
Heard amid the lone mountains, or along
The starlit seas. But here were those who shook
All fancies off before the very man ;
So was he, of such aspect, with such eyes.
And, tho' long cycles lay 'twixt him and them,
The love, that fed upon his presence once,
Drew in all hearts such picture of his form
That they could paint it into other hearts,
A never-dying memory ; tho' the isle,

What time he lived among them and was seen,
Was peopled with the many forms of one,
According as he came to him or her,
Diverse in lesser moods, the same in great.
But one great image haunted every eye,
And spoke in every tongue, his last great day
Of sorrow and of glory, when he left
All whom he had delighted, all on earth
That had delighted him, and fed his soul.
Long days I linger'd in the rocky isle,
Feeding my soul in silence ; for it seem'd
The haunts of men were idle, and their ways
A weary waste of life, their pastimes vain ;
Their passions, kindled at the passing hour,
But fires of straw ; while I could fill the time,
They call'd the present, with the mighty past :
Make pictures under shadowy rocks, and near
The wayside fountain ; underneath the pine,
Or figtree branching o'er the garden wall.
And hear a voice they heard not on the shore,
Speaking to me out of the sounding seas,
Whose music long ago had answer'd him,
The blind old man, led by the hand along
Familiar places, which he could have traced
Alone ; so well was every winding path
Known to him in the days when light and life
Began together, and the love of all
Fair things, a vision once, a memory then.
And not in vain I wander'd here and there,

Hoping, as 'twere, to waken once again
An echo of that voice ; to see pass by
A shadow of that form. And so it chanced
That, lost amid the windings of a vale,
Weary I enter'd by the garden gate
Of a fair countryhouse, and sued its lord
To suffer me a little to repose,
And gather strength—for the midsummer sun
Smote on me—and the knowledge of the way.
But he gave welcome with free heart and hand.
And not an hour, but many days, I pass'd
Under that roof, and listen'd to a man
Among the noblest of that place and time,
Who came from ancestors who number'd him
The bard of Ilion of their kin. He said,
'One near to him, heir to his very soul,
A sister's son, who led him in his walks,
And drew in, as it were, the vital air,
The breaths he utter'd—one who lived not long—
So finely chorded was his tuneful frame,
That, like a harp clash'd rudely, 'twas unstrung
By the first onsets of the angry world—
And, as the music shaken from the strings
Vanishes in the aery void, his life
Fled after the flown soul, and yet he lived
Long enough in the light of it to learn
The love and secret of sweet Poesy,
How yearning passions shape themselves in song,
As smouldering ardours burst away in flame—

How the rapt soul, in vision spiritual,
Lights up the Past when all its days are gone,
And the dark Future ere its deeds are done—
He stood by when the giant took his flight,
And clothed the solemn, unforgotten hour
With his own melody.' To my wondering eyes
My host unfolded the immortal scroll ;
And in my memory, as in his, the tale
Burns like a picture, every tint aglow.
So, what I tell thee, Sappho, is as true
Now, as it was three hundred years ago.

II

These are the words the youthful minstrel sang,
In honour of the aged bard he loved.
I have transcribed them, but my memory bears
Each written word, as surely as the scroll.
' In the cool twilight of a seaward cave,
That open'd on a floor of sunny sand,
Lapp'd by the silver waves, whose ripples faint
Tinkled among the rocks and curved shells,
Some fishers linger'd in the drowsy noon,
Some slumbering in the shadows, their swart brows
Kiss'd by the golden stars, that glanced atween
The tangled leaves that curtain'd up the grot :
And some, their morning toil refresh'd with sleep,
Sat murmuring of old songs, and weaving tales,
The while their nets before them in the sun

Hung dangling and the wind. They sat together,
And gazed along the deep with purple laid,
And emerald, far into the misty clouds ;
And saw the soft sky-tinted isles, the shores
Under the mighty hills crag-turreted ;
And saw the sunlight fall upon the walls
And towers of a fair city by the sea.
And one was there, a deep-eyed man and old.
O'er his broad shoulders hung his ancient locks,
And touch'd the reverend beard upon his breast,
And stirr'd in the warm air ; tall was his form
As of a warrior, tho' the storms of Time,
Much travel, and more thought, had stoop'd his brows
Earthward ; but from the dark heaven of his eye
Soft lightnings glanced, and tender tears would fall
To hear a mournful tale, a lovesong sweet,
Or wreck, or feat of arms, or realm of wonder.
In youth he pass'd from land to land, and knew
All the blue inlets, and the stormy straits,
The rivers, and the mountains by their names ;
The Egean isles, and the Egyptian seas ;
And pluckt gold fruit from the Hesperides.
All cities fair, that shadow'd in the sea
Their marble columns, from Phœnician shores
To Gades west, he had beheld, and knew.
And North and South from the Great Pyramid
To breezy Mitylene ; and he had look'd
On the red ruin of the Etnæan surge,
And heard Charybdis rage, and Scylla bark ;

And he had talk'd with kings in carven chambers,
And with the beggar at the palace gate ;
And in the rugged mountain shepherd's hut
Slept by the piny torrent, and had heard
The nightly lions roar on Afric's coast.
And he had spoken with dead chiefs, a boy,
Who, in their boyhood long ago, had touch'd
The armed hands of heroes, that had warr'd
Beneath Troywall, and saw the temples fall.
And trod among the dust of Ilion ;
And in the courts of Hecatompilos ;
And heard the whispers of the oracles.
So that his heart was as a holy tomb
Lit with a quenchless lamp, and in his brain,
Swathed with perennial fancies of his own,
Lived the dry bones of cycles ; and he spake
Of ancient things as though he had been 'by.
And now that lordly man, so wise, was old
And blind ; and all the beauty of the World
Brought him no more its gladness as before ;
Tho' still he loved to sit upon the shore,
And quaff the breeze, and hear the waters roll.
And he would listen to the fishers' song,
And tell them marvels he had seen in youth,
And wonders he had heard ; and they would lean,
Charm'd by his raptur'd eyes, and glorious voice,
All the hush'd noon to listen to his words.
Low at his feet there lay a bright-eyed boy,
The guardian of his steps ; who, as he spóke,

Turn'd on him upward looks of awful love,
And lived within the shadow of his soul,
Whose steps he tended ; and he raised his brows
With a sweet smile, as though he blest the day
He once had seen ; ' And thou,' he said, ' glad Light,
And ye blue Isles, and thou melodious Sea,
Mountains and shores that are so beautiful ;
Ye marble cities gleaming by the waves ;
Thou, Nature, that hast nurtured and attuned
My heart to thine ; oh ! would that I could see
Once, as of old, the blessed summer-day,
And feast once more my low-declining age
With sight of that which made my joy in youth.
Then would I yield my soul without repining,
With the rare memory of that parting look
Pictured upon it ; and my harp should sound
To the sad ghosts the world they see no more.
O sunny islands of the ebbless waves !
It is so long since these dark eyes beheld
Your hills and valleys, thymy slopes, and bays,
That, out of memories, Phantasy hath wrought
A world of wonder all her own ; O isles,
Bright isles, that once look'd on me from the blue
Untroubled sea, methinks I see ye now ;
So blessed is the sight of these blind orbs,
Clad in such beauty as the soul alone
Delights to fashion smiling the mix'd light
Of all rare fruits and flowers that ever zoned
This earth of ours. I seem to see ye now,—

So marvellous the living light within,—
Fit home for Gods, or for immortal men,
Who have thrown by the sorrows of the world.
Ye cradle Summer all the year in vineyards,
Rose-vestured plain, perennial palmy bower,
In laughing hillside, and in fadeless garden.
I seem to see ye, not as once I saw,
Reckless of half the joy that met my eyes,
When first my boyhood wander'd in your ways,
Though all this world is hidden from me now ;
And I see nought but gulphy Night ; it seems
I look up at the azure deep above me
Through the translucent and ambrosial dome
Of blossoms, buds, and sprays that overspread me.
In your fair aspects I behold the soul
Of Nature's perfect beauty, and am happy.
In the warm air around I feel the spirit
Of an all-present love, so soft, so vital,
So plenteously outpour'd on all, infused
In all things ; in its breath my heart goes forth,
Wing'd with the essences of all things glad,
Rapt from broad ocean, earth, and sky ; your Sun
Seems as an holy universal Eye
Undimm'd, all-glorious, an Eternal Life.
I love to look upon ye, as ye lie
On the great deep like many crowns, and breathe
Upon the waters from your balmy shores ;
And shed on them the colours of your flowers,
Your waving vines, your myrtled crags, and lawns

Of asphodel and amaranth ; and with gold
And purple light illuminate the sea,
Till its unnumber'd gardens, link'd together
By their own lustrous images, shine like one
Perennial chain of garlands ; like to gems
Set in a zone for Amphitrite's breast,
Or everlasting Iris in the waves.'

III

My mother and my sister stood apart
Some paces from him, marking every change,
That pass'd across his face, in silent fear.
Just then a blind man begg'd with piteous voice
And many a prayer ; and, tho' that noble pair
Walk'd in the crowd as if unconscious of it,
The youthful daughter turn'd to that sad note,
And listening bad her mother drop an alms.
'Mother, mother,' she said, 'if we forget
The woes of others we may not forgo
The memory of our own ; and that might serve
To mind us of them ' ; ' Daughter, I forget not.
But Truth is hard to find in this ill world,
As fountains in the desert ; if it dwell not
With greatness and prosperity, no more
Does it inhabit lowly ones, and poor.
And thus the heart grows iron at the sight
Of falling tears, and customary sighs,
Hypocrisy, the serpent peeping out
From every bosom ; so that love at last

Is curdled into doubt ; and doubt is frozen
Into a wintry silence of despair
Of all good things.' 'But, oh ! they bless us, mother,
Oh ! they commend us to the blessed Gods,
And we have need of blessing :' 'But they curse us
As often. If their curses and their blessings
Bear answering fruit, then our calamities
Will have no end ; their blessings are not hearted,
Their curses be ; for there is pride too, pride
Ev'n in the humblest, that is none the less
For all its rags ; and the proud heart records not
Good acts, though it resents an oversight ;
And oftentimes in its secretest heart of all
Pays ill for good received. Alas ! alas !
That it should be so. Such is man, my child ;
But if it be so, what have we to hope
From poor men's prayers ?' 'But he is blind, O mother,
Ev'n as my grandsire ; he is in his prime
Of days, if misery hath its youth at all.
And to the lack of eyesight adds the void
Of all the good things of this evil world,
Knowledge, and power, and glory ; think of that !
And through his senses he hath never drawn
That bitter food that strengthens the ill passion.
His days and nights are darkness ; he sees not
The sun in heaven, the beauty of the earth ;
Nor vain distinctions between man and man.
To him the hut and palace are the same,
And smiles and scorns. The chariots of our kings

Roll by him, and their horses fling their heads
I' the wind proudly, and pass us like the wind.
He sees it not, nor glittering arms, nor gold
Apparel, nor the vain magnificence
Of this world ; all is empty nought to him,
As one day it shall be to us ; meanwhile
His life is death, or worse ; he envies not
Beauty or Strength ; for Envy is a dwarf,
That cannot see but giants ; Envy looks
Out of his watch-towers in the eyes of men.
He bears not Hate, he dreads not the cold eyes
Of Age ; then tell me, wherefore should he strive
With his own soul, which, if unforced, will turn
With kindness to the hand that he may touch,
And to the heart, that stretches him that hand,
As freely as the butterfly comes forth
To spread his wings in sunshine, or the flower
Its morning bells ?' ' And yet, my child, he hears ;
And knowledge enters thro' that single gate
Faster than if he had another sense
Brought him from heaven by Hermes—to make good
The lack of vision,—and to him the sounds
Inaudible to us, are clear and loud.
He stirs in a new world ; the whispering winds
Have voices for him, and he hears the wings
Of wild birds, and the feet of creeping things.
The gamut of man's voice hath notes for him,
As many as a lark's, which tell him all
The subtlest shades of feelings ; and he knows

The heart thro' hearing. Will not wisdom then
By that one entrance pass as freely in,
As tho' it hurried in thro' many gates,
Like as at portals of a theatre
You see the ignoble jostle one another,
Tho' doors be open ; so confusion grows.
Tho' if one narrow adit let them in
They must pass one by one, or not at all.
Hence if he catches an ill tone, with him
It dwells, and multiplies its evil echoes
Till he is ev'n as others—and at war
With all men.' 'Oh ! but alms are given in silence,
And if he cannot see the frown that kills
The charity of many—neither sees he
The smile that makes it welcome. Shall I sing,
My mother, something that my grandsire loves ;
And, while it trembles in the poet's soul,
May shed a moment's light into the heart
Of the lorn outcast, and may serve instead
Of gold pour'd on his hand? For, mother dear,
Methinks that one whose spirit only takes
The impress of sweet sounds, must needs draw in
Such blisses from sweet music, as belong
To them, who hear Apollo witching up
The sun with song, enchantment tenfold more
Than that they feel who pasture their delights
From all the springs of Day. To him a song
Breathing divinely, or a harp well struck,
Or flute, by cunning fingers touch'd with art,

May bring Elysian foretastes ; his dark morn
Fill'd with such sounds may serve instead of sunrise,
And out of Nought bring new-created forms,
Fancies, and feelings, fresh, and magic worlds
Lit by another sun. I love to sit
Ofttimes in darkness, that I so may learn
Sweet music better.' 'Yet, my child, its spells
Work best, when they bring back remember'd acts.
Great landscapes we have seen, departed moments
Of loving, tender converse we have held,
Trances of glory, festal evens, dawns
Of bridal days ; all things the memory holds
Take shape, and colour from sweet-flowing sounds
Of a diviner beauty, as stones and shells
That lie beneath a clear and rapid stream
Look clearer still, more beautiful than those
Scatter'd along the sands.' She paused, and mused ;
And said unto herself, 'Ay, but this man,
Born blind, and poor, whose lifelong days have been
Darkness of body and of mind, hath not
So much, or aught that my blind father owns,
Sweet memories to be waken'd : blessed Gods
Avenge him not on me if I have spoken
Cold words and pitiless.' And then she turn'd
Upon the loving girl her tearful eyes ;
'Bless thee, my child, thou art more wise than I.
I will be guided by thy liberal heart ;
My heart shall follow thine, or it may drown
In darkness darker than the blind man's eyes.

The pity in thine eyes shall be my star
When I am like to wander ; better die
Than like a frozen fountain issue nought,
Nor hues, nor motions, or the melody
Of pleasant sounds, till all things round it perish.’
She said and pour’d into the beggar’s wallet
All that she had, so that he wonder’d more
Than if hard words had driven him from the place.

IV

Then spake the dying minstrel from his chair.
‘ Daughter and daughter’s child, while yet ye spake,
The lingering life within me ebb’d and flow’d ;
And joy and pain have mingled in my heart ;
But joy hath triumph’d in me, as I hear
That love hath won a victory over fear.
That the child’s heart hath stirr’d the timeworn mind,
The daughter drawn the mother to her side.
Bring him to me, the blind man to the blind,
That I may bless him while I yet can bless,
That he may bless me, and remember, when
The gulph of darkness lies between us two,
For then perchance an everlasting chain
May bridge the interval ; as when a voice
Comes back to us in echo from beyond
Some deep dark river we have never swam,
Or mountain summit we have never scaled.’
That poor man with blind eyes, who had no gold
To handle, and no wisdom in its stead,

Knelt down before the blind man who had both.
The one stretch'd forth his hand unto the other,
And laid it on his head ; the other took
That hand in his and kiss'd it ; while his voice
Utter'd his love, one treasure of his soul.
And so the first time, as twin majesties,
They met together in equality,
On this earth ; and the love unfeignedly
Given and taken crown'd them both, and made
Their statures equal in the sight of Gods,
The lowly bramble lofty as the pine.
Then spake again my mother : ' Sing, oh sing !
My daughter, for few voices are like thine
For power and sweetness ; waken his sad soul,
Who hath no memories of the earth and Heaven,
Of summer trees that surge, and fling their blossoms,
No pleasant pictures of beloved ones,
No thoughts of the sun rising o'er the hills,
No glowing gorgeous evens in his heart,
No Mayday floors of emerald, nor starr'd nights
Stored in his fancy. What the Gods may yield him
In compensation for his grievous ill
We may not know at all : but who would change
The unexhausted treasurehouse of day,
Piled by the nimble hands of all the hours,
And ever furnish'd with freshgather'd spoil,
For all the glimmering shadows of a mine,
For all the wonders underneath the earth,
Or all the stars of midnight, couldst thou clutch them

And hold them in thy hand? Then sing, oh sing,
And let me hear thee, sweet one; for thy voice
Sounds as the voice of one whom I have lost
And ne'er shall see again; even myself,
When I was as thou art. The morn is fair,
The waves are running in, the fresh green hills
Breathe down ambrosial spirits to the deep,
And snatch up the wild freshness from the seas,
And all the soul of Nature is astir
With life as fresh as thine. Sing, let me dream.'

V

She spoke; and that fair girl began to sing
A weird, sweet song of Fate and Time; she sang
The dazzling daybreak of prosperity,
Of wealth and power, and praise; of mirth and joy;
Of moments fled like waters in the light.
She sang the past, a bright midsummer dawn,
The future nobler than the past, a sun
Soaring into the zenith; sang of youth,—
As full of golden promise, of sweet hopes,
Of ecstasies, as when a slumbering babe
Holds forth his palm, to catch a rain from heaven;
Of roses shed upon him from the hands
Of watchful, waking Gods, whose loving eyes
Sphere him like stars;—a time of day, that hears
Nothing but music, and the birds that sing
Are sinless thoughts and pure—not yet awhile

Waked by the troublous world—and if there be
Less welcome voices they are all unheard—
Her voice rose high, and changed. Again she sang
Of sudden tempest, sweeping down the white
Springblossoms ; of the forward-stretching arms
Of sorrows, flying from the wrath to come,
And dread pursuing thunders ; of the heavens
Sunder'd with fire, and the gigantic shape
Of Nemesis, her javelin poised to strike ;
The laughter of avenging Gods ; the fall
Of skyward towers amid the dust of doom ;
Then lamentation like a weary wind,
Then silence, sadness, moonlight, and a calm.
Methought, oh ! in that silver virgin voice,
On earth I heard the disembodied soul
Of mortal sorrow pleading to the Fates.
The old man bow'd his head on his white beard,
And tears fell slowly down his wither'd cheeks.
He too perchance had fallen from the peak
Of prosperous pride, or mourn'd for those who had.
His blind eyes glitter'd through his scatter'd locks,
So that he seem'd some noble forest tree
In latter Autumn, stript of half its leaves—
The stars of heaven shine through it, and the moon
Rises behind its dark majestic arms.

VI

Once more the young girl took up that sweet song
In minor mode. Now 'twas no more of hopes,
Like flashes of the dawn that kiss the hills,
Before the valleys and the woods between
Are lit with sunshine ; but of quiet hours
After a tempest, when the evening beams
Tremble among the raindrops on the vines,
And the full roses droop their heads, and sway
Before the westwind. 'Twas of hearts resign'd,
And folded hands, and yearnings after peace,
Peace only, such as broken hearts may feel,
When the last lightnings of calamity
Are sunk to windward, and still death, like night,
Shall cast its shadows on the troubled life ;
Sweet peace, more welcome than the noon of joy
Broken with storms that rend the leaves and flowers,
Broken with passionate griefs, that waste the soul,
And leave a silence after like despair ;
Peace, as the low light of the setting sun
Which two long wanderers, weary of the world,
Look to with eyes that have shed all their tears,
And hands entwined, and hearts that beat together.
She finish'd—she had sung a song of his,
Mæonides the aged, writ in youth,
Well nigh forgotten.—Did he still remember
All those fond words, writ when the youthful fancy,
Weary with overgladness, turns at times

For pastime ev'n to sorrow, and delights
To picture that it never thinks to feel ;
And in the mimic moods of boyhood mocks
The wakeful Fates, perchance provokes their wrath,
And is an oracle, but unawares ?
Had he remember'd thro' his vexed years
Those early words ? from that sweet tongue they flow'd
So vital with her melody divine,
That for each word he paused, like one entranced,
And strove not even to outrun in thought
The thoughts that were his own ; so well they sprang
From those young lips, as sweet they seem'd as new.
' There is yet one more verse,' the maiden said ;
' But it hath 'scaped my memory : ' as she spake
The blind old man took up with his deep voice
The last link of the chain—so that I wonder'd—
' Farewell to fortune, and farewell to fame.
Let Time sweep onward to the dark, dark sea,
Honour, and wealth, and glories of the world.
While there is one who loves me by my side,
Two tender eyes that answer unto mine,
For all the rest my spirit shall not pine.'
Then spake the dying bard : ' Beloved one,
My words on thy sweet tongue have moved me so,
That I remember'd all thou hadst forgot ;
For it was utter'd ere these eyes were dark.
Ofttimes I have repeated it with tears.
But now the pain is past, for ye are here,
Ye dear ones ; if I cannot see ye now,

Ye see me, and I hear ye, and your words,
 For many a year, have been as the kind rays
 Breathed from the sun whose light I cannot see.'

VII

'Daughter,' he said, 'bring me a cup of wine ;
 It is the last that I shall quaff on earth.'
 Whereat she rain'd into a carven chalice,
 Borne from some banquet-house, a kingly gift,
 Rich amber drops, that glitter'd as they fell,
 Like precious gems ; and for a little space
 The flickering life within him flash'd again.
 Now there were many roundabout his chair,
 Old men, their foreheads deeper delved by time,
 Albeit their years were many less than his ;
 Young mothers with their infants in their arms
 And parted lips ; and men of war there were,
 But now return'd from foughten fields, who leant
 Silently on their shields, and look'd on him,
 Unsceptred monarch of their very thoughts,
 With awful reverence, such as Aias, nor
 Pelides would have challenged, had they served
 In days of which he sung. And now it seem'd
 As though his lamp of thought, long burning low,
 Was for a moment fed, as in his prime,
 With the old loves, and raptures : Oh ! he seem'd
 That day, altho' the morn was night to him,
 To see once more, as with some inner eye,
 The ancient deeds that he had sung to men ;

As though in his strong youth he stood and saw
The silent past, with all its sights and sounds
Awaken'd in a moment ; and he rose
Half from his seat, as if he heard the cry
Of the great striving from within the walls
Of sacred Ilion fated to her fall ;
And the proud voice of onward foes, and groans
Of Dardans trampled underfoot, and saw
The dust of tumbling towers, and smoke, and flame.
'Hark ! hark !' he said, ' I hear a piteous voice,
'That pierces thro' the hosts of armed men
Sharper than the sharp arrows ; spare that head
That towers above the rest, touch'd with the snows
Of many winters, as the cloudy crest
Of Ida o'er the lesser hills ; oh ! think
Of all the memory of so dire a deed.
Oh ! think ye if it be a little thing
To slay an old man of an hundred years,
Who hath not wrong'd ye ; leave him to that hand
That soon must gather him ; else what shall hide
The dreadful image from ye here on earth,
Or underneath it ?' Then it pass'd away,
And still another phantom took its place.
And now 'twas the pale widow at the spring
In a far land and desolate ; and tears
Fell from those blind eyes, and he stretch'd his hand,
As 'twere toward the unutterable woe
Of that forsaken captive ; and he cried ;—
' Daughter of kings, bereaved one ; am I

To sit by here regardless, while I see
The homely urn on that dishonour'd head?
Come, I will bear it for thee day by day.
Alas! she passes with the mute regard,
That shows how vain have been my pleading words;
Deaf are her ears save to the silent tongues;
Blind are her eyes save to the dread unseen.'
Again the dust of battle bears away
All other pictures, and he bends his head,
And seems to see a dead man on the ground,
His helm unfasten'd, and his youthful hair
Blown o'er the sands. 'See,' tenderly he says,
'How the tall warrior, as an infant, sleeps,
No frowning brow, no anger on his lips!
He smiles, he smiles; I wonder what he sees.
Haply he sees thro' glooms of death, where they,
The unforgotten chiefs and ancient kings,
Take the sweet rest denied them in this world;
And the delightful vision draws his soul
Beyond all shadows of mortality.
They stretch their arms unto him and he smiles!
But, if he sleeps in peace, another wakes
Tenfold his equal, as a giant strong,
And as a God in beauty! See he comes!
As one who is aroused from evil dreams,
And, though he breathes the morning from his tent,
Looks on two vaster evils, death and dole.'

VIII

Again a smile comes over his pale face,
Tearful and sweet, as though he saw a sight
That mingled tender things and terrible.
And then he sigh'd, and said : 'Alas ! alas !
For mortal man in this drear world, when all,
That stirs the heart most fondly, is a beam
Of wintry sunlight, which the gloomy clouds
Shed forth a moment, and then close again
In stormy darkness. Fear upon the face
Of the sweet child, that shrinks and hides its head,
Mix'd with the yearning love, that fain would fly
To the strong arms that are stretch'd out to him,
Is but a jocund thing, that wakens up
The last pale smile upon the parents' lips.
They gaze together on the little one
And that last tearful glance of their true love
Gives a fresh hope to her, fresh heart to him.
O Heaven ! did he remember, as he fell,
That glimmering moment ? did she dream of it
In the far land ? And where was he, the boy,
The hope of both, whom loving arms infold
From no worse terror than a glittering helm ?'

IX

All on a sudden his dilated eyes
Seem fix'd on something dreadful, and he gave

A cry that echoed mournfully, and raised
His palms as tho' to hide it from his sight.
And then he spoke out. ' Ah me ! is it thus
The mighty show their might, to spurn the weak ?
Heap wrong on wrong, and send the troubled dead
To wait their advent in the realms unseen,
And give them ghastly welcome ? Shall the first
Of men dishonour what can arm no more
A hand against him, and so wreak his strength
On nothing ? Shall the kingly father bend
Earthward, and mix his waste tears with the dust,
That thou may'st do a deed to be abhorr'd,
That cannot harm the dead that was thy foe,
That cannot heal the dead who was thy friend ?
Alas ! how dismal is the rushing sound
Of brazen wheels ; I hear it, oh ! I hear,
As though I heard it on that very day !

X

And thou, O thou false woman, triple-crown'd
With beauty, and with glory, and with shame !
Whom brave men, fearing only the great Gods,
Saw and were vanquish'd ; whom proud women pass'd
Without a frown, as one enthroned above
This world in majesty ! What hast thou done ?
Didst thou too see the widow in her woe ?
And hide thy fair face in thy vesture, lest,
Ev'n in her deep humility, she should curse

With her wan lips the monarch of her woes?
Or didst thou scorn the captive, fallen lower,
For all her goodness, than thou in thy sin?
I know not; but this lamentable world
Seems to me, in my sore perplexity,
As though it took its fortunes, and its fates,
Dealt to it by blind eyes, and thriftless hands;
Else thy disastrous brows had never borne
A crown, or she her sad captivity.

XI

Oh! that my words, like drops that never cease,
Until the marble rock, as old as Time,
Yields to it, falling on the pride of man,
Thro' countless generations, might subdue
Ambition harder than the rock, and cool
That quenchless thirst of glory, which is hate
Hid in a painted mask! (Poor human life
Too brief for any good that it can do
Wasted in fever fires!) That the strong man,
Arming for victory, might hold back, and hark,
Amid the beating hoofs, and rushing wheels
Rolling to battle, the first trumpet-note
From ghostly Ilium far away behind
Millennial clouds; and think that what is done
Haply in lands remote, with other arms
And other races, hath been done before
In times, as dark and silent as the sky

Of the orient at midnight, and by hosts,
Whose arms and armour glitter'd as the waves
This summermorn, as these blind eyes have seen,
Whose very dust hath shrunk to lesser dust,
Whose very bones will be unsearchable
As leafless forests swept by hungry fire !
Then might he muse, and ask of his own soul,
'Have wars brought peace, or hath the seed of blood,
Sown in the earth, for ever grown the crop
Of hatred and of sorrow? Will the spark,
Blown from thy burning ruins, city of woe,
Still burn into the future? Will the tears
Of weary captives toiling in the dust,
Of widows and of orphans, fail to quench
The flames of evil howling thro' the deeps
Of many thousand years? Or will the woes,
Begun with Time, stretch on for evermore?'
What matters it that these old eyes are blind,
If those, whose hearts are blind and not their eyes,
Shall feel them soften'd by the oldest tale
Of the old sorrows, and relent, and look
The first time on the madness of the world,
And listen to the whispers of the dead?
Pardon me, friends, if I have utter'd words
Less than heroic; scorn not what I say,
Tho' for the first time ye have heard my words.
For I must leave ye; for my thoughts have been
For many years companions of the dark;
And other voices than these busy times

Have call'd unto me, and breathed into me
Counsels unheard of in this armed age.
And pity for the pains I cannot heal
Hath shut my mind to deeds I cannot share,
And made me deaf to any sound but sighs.
I see no more Achilles, or the bulk
Of Aias, or Sarpedon ; they grow dim
And dimmer ; but I follow her in dreams
Whose doom was desolation, and I plead
Beside the ruin'd king on bended knees.'

XII

He sat awhile in silence, for no voice
Broke in upon it ; so he heard the sea
Lapse mournfully along the shore, the wind
Sweep thro' the whispering caverns, like the hosts
Of Aïdoneus, and he seem'd to lean
His ear to listen. And so suddenly
The old harp, falling from his heedless hand,
Was shatter'd with a wailing sound ; and when
He knew it lying on the rocky floor,
Its well-known melodies no more to ring
Again for evermore ; oh ! when he mark'd
The sudden omen—for his age was great—
He clasp'd his palms in silence, and he sigh'd.
And then he seem'd to wake up from a trance,
His voice was changed : ' 'Tis well,' he said, 'I come ;
Thy tuneful strings were twined about my heart

So fondly, that the two, so link'd in one,
Must break together. Bear me out, O friends,
And set me in the sun upon the sands,
That the last murmur in mine ears may be
The song of the blue sea amid the isles :
And the soft wing of the sea air may stir
My hair, and kiss me on the brows. I come
To send forth to ye, liberal elements,
My own freed spirit, and to sweep with ye
On wings more swift than yours, the hills and isles,
The winding valleys, and the viny plains,
The sounding seabeach, and the rivershore ;
To see, with other than these sunless eyes,
The world shut out from them this many a year.
For still I hope to visit oft again
The cities I have sung ; to come with them,
Whose earthly ventures I have clothed in words,
And given immortal names ; and if my thoughts
Be fancy wandering still in pleasant ways,
And only fancy, oh ! let me rejoice,
Ev'n at these utmost moments, in such dreams
As flatter me with light, and rather feel
The sweetness of a vision than the truth—
If truth it be which all my heart denies,
Which hath no welcome from a living soul—
Than see no shapes beyond the shore of Time,
But joyless shadows ; hear no utterance
But sighs, and vain repinings ; when the heart
Hath not a hope to feed on ; and the day

Is but a ghastly twilight, and no change,
But to behold fresh armies of pale ghosts
Come weeping to me, who can give them nought,
For consolation, but the tale of years
Remember'd, till at last the memory fails
Ev'n of that Past which is the All to them.
Still do I hope to be at hand when Pride
And Vengeance strive together on the earth ;
And Patience battles with unequal arms ;
And Pity is not heard amid the storms
Of struggling Hates. My pleadings, though unheard,
May still be felt about the hearts of men,
And touch the worst of evil with some good.'
Again he paused, and they bent over him,
My sister and my mother, not to lose
His last last breath. But, though all sounds were hush'd,
They scarce could hear his voice that even now
Spoke in its strength ; it seem'd the utterance came
From deep within, as though a spirit sent,
Out of the Infinite, to mortal man
In winged words faint echoes of a world
Afar, first tidings of things heard and seen.
Tho' faint the voice, his words were fast ; he said,
'Hark ! there is music ; hear ye not the sound ?
And, tho' mine eyes are blind, I see a light,
A light as from another sun ; and lo !
The light is music, and the music light,
The one infolds the other ; do I see
Great hosts descending, nearer, and more near ?

Oh ! now I see whence the glad music came.
And, in the centre of the brightness, ranged
A godlike company in festal robes,
And, throned above them, one who gives a sign ;
And they rise up, and take their harps of gold,
And strike them suddenly ; and sing a song
That once came to me sweetly in a dream,
And from behind innumerable flow
The mingled floods of voice and instrument,
As from a spanless and harmonious sea.
Apollo, King Apollo, is it thou
I see at length ? Are these—?’ He spoke no more.
And, when the last tone of that golden tongue
Had died, and there was silence, all the crowd
Look’d on the old man ; many eyes were dim
With unaccustom’d tears ; and brave men sigh’d,
And women wail’d ; and still his sightless orbs
Gazed upward ; still his palms, as though in prayer,
Were clasp’d together, and his lips apart,
As though he would have spoken ; and a smile,
As though his latest thought had been of joy,
Linger’d thereon, sweet as the last sunbeams
Upon the deep. But nevermore was heard
That voice that shook the nations, and would shake,
Ev’n with its echoes, when it was not heard,
The unborn ages ; and there was no sound,
But the wind sighing, and the murmuring sea.’

EUTHANASIA

Hesper, thou bringest back again
All that the gaudy daybeams part,
The sheep, the goat back to their pen,
The child home to his mother's heart.

SAPPHO.

I

“I TOLD thee how Miletus was the first,”
He said : “of all the cities that I saw
In that long age of my self-banishment :
And so it was the last. Ah me ! what need
To tell thee more of the long years between,
Of penury, of sickness, and of care ?
I saw it in my youth, and in my age.
I bore away with me into far lands
Fair memories of a happy home, and songs,
And bridal jubilee. When I return'd,
I found but ashes of long-quenched fires.
The spectres of the first realities
Were full of life ; sweet memories thron'd the heart
To overflowing ; the last realities

Were spectres only. Where was she, the proud
And blissful? where was he, the brave and true?
Dost thou remember Anaktoria,
Whose beauty was the wonder of us all,
Sometime in Mitylene, when she danced,
And sang at our high island festivals,
The proud heart, and the liberal hand—thy friend,
O Sappho? Who should rise up, in my thought,
Before Milesian Anaktoria,
When after my long years I found me here?
Ev'n at Miletus when I thought of her,
'Twas but the picture of her past perfections,
Her large dark eyes, her girlish bloom, her brow
Fair, smooth as virgin marble, her tall stature,
Her swift step, and her lovely motions—all
As though an imaged ideality,
A Nymph, should leave her carven pedestal,
And pass in glory thro' the midst of us,
And bid us see and wonder. I forgot
The years between; where was she, and what now?
Queen she might be as she was born to be.
And then I painted her in Tyrian robe,
The golden circle round her brows, her hand
Grasping the sceptre of Ionia.
Then later memories gather'd o'er the first.
She was a wife; and round her chair might stand
Fair sons and daughters, fruitage of a vine
That overshadow'd them, and promise Time,
Through endless generations, to bear down

Her own imperial beauty—like perspectives
Of endless walks of roses. Then again
Came sadder thoughts, waves of an ebbing tide,
That sons and daughters would be born to them,
So many were the years between. Ah! then
There came the saddest thought. ‘Perhaps,’ I said,
And shudder’d as a sudden gust blew up
The dust around me, and in a murmur ceased
Much like a sigh—an inarticulate dirge
That haply bred in me that mournful forethought
‘If she be dead!’ and a last look of her
Awoke in my remembrance, of the best
Of those brief lightnings of divinity
That for a moment scatter from the earth
All cloud of ill; ev’n then I stood awhile
And stay’d my steps, as though I saw again
That vision radiant.

II

’Twas a morn of May;
And once more the old haunts, the well-known streets,
The fountains, and the gardens of this bright
And lordly city, brought back ev’n to sense
The hours of wondering bliss, when, but a boy
Curious and eager, I had revell’d here.
Again the voices of the passers by
Seem’d those I then had heard; and, often struck
By some familiar tone, which wrought on me

As 'twere a spell, and brought up from the dead
Of long oblivion moments rich and rare,
I turn'd round to the speaker, when, alas !
I saw but some strange face ; for those I knew
Were mostly old and changed, their voices now
Unlike what I remembered, and for which
I took the happier tones of younger men.
Their eyes were sunken, and their cheeks, dry beds
Of torrents, show'd the strength of many winters ;
And some were bow'd with grief, and some with pain ;
Some stared with large eyes, and would beat their brows
To recollect my name ; and many, ah !
How many, now were fallen from Fortune's wheel,
And trodden under foot, their woods and fields
Made over to the stranger, and their palaces
Struck with decay ; and many more, how many
Were dead ! and some were mad and knew me not,
Or mock'd and threaten'd me, and their young heirs—
The good sometimes inheritors of ill,
Oftener the ill of good—were shown to me.
And tears would dim my sight as I beheld
Their faces like their fathers. But hard eyes,
And laughing lips, untemper'd with affliction,
Would cross me, like the cruel morning wind
To one aweary with a sleepless watch,
And faint with pain. Rather would I have sat
Down by the pilgrim's side, and heard his moan ;
Or with the bruised soldier stood, and talk'd,
Or listen'd to the story of his woes ;

Or with the grey old beggar, as he wiped
The dust from off his forehead, and again
Took up his lowly plaint. To them a word
Of pity, or a slender offering woke
The concord of a human heart with mine,
That after those drear dissonances came
With something of sweet music. Now, the while
I linger'd sadly by the city gate,
Watching the passers by, and naming them
Fondly by names of friends I knew of old,
Oft as I mark'd in them similitude
Of motion or of aspect : as I stood,
Came by a lady, and her daughter, one
Aged, tho' yet unbow'd by years, her stature
Majestic, and her noble features told
Of her young beauty, and her youth of triumphs.
But she who walk'd beside her, still in flower
Of girlhood, and in virgin loveliness
Fresh as an Oread or a Naiad—she
Was daughter to that mother—but how like
Fair Anaktoria, as she had been,
Ev'n like as is the morn unto the morn !
Who, as I look'd upon her, held me there
As by a charm. Not only that proud beauty,
Those large eyes, and that forehead marble-clear,
Were such as might take captive old and young ;
But in that mould she seem'd so fully cast,
That I, methought, beheld the selfsame form,
That marvellous creature, taken at her prime

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Of all delights, and from that hour endow'd
With immortality. So like she seem'd,
As tho' great Aphrodite had forgot
For once her envies at the sight of her,
And, smit with admiration, crown'd her thus
With a perpetual youth. I felt as though
All days since then had been a moment's sleep
Dilated by a painful dream. I stood
Again before the selfsame city-gate,
The selfsame happy boy ; and mark'd as then
The flood of men, the motions, and the tumult,
And the gay festivals come forth with songs
And garlands ; and her too the fairest flower,
Daughter of Agathyrus, whom we paused
To gaze on as she pass'd. A sudden thought
Urged me to simulate a poor man's state.
Yet 'twas not all unreal, for my cares
Were grave, and my necessity was true,
My bow'd and wrinkled age, my snowwhite hair,
Ev'n from my Melanippus—were that friend
Still living—might have hid, as in a mask,
All traces of my other self, that boy
Whom he had known. My worn apparel sprent
With dust, and tatter'd, left no likelihood
That he who sued for alms with a sad voice
Was not a lowly beggarman, but one
Of the old Lesbian nobles. As they stood
To look on me, and gave into my hand
Their bounty, I gave utterance to the words

Of an old song, a flower of hope and youth,
Which Anaktoria full oft had pour'd
Into the morning air ; before two rhythms
Were well exhausted, they had given a cry
Of mere astonishment ; and, ' Who art thou ?'
The young girl said, ' for oh ! that dear sweet song
My mother sang, and I have learnt it from her.
Alcæus writ it, ere he fled away,
No one knows where ; he was my father's brother :'
' Then art thou my own niece, for I am he !'
I utter'd ; and I lifted up my voice,
And wept, to think that I was not forsaken,
And that the moonless night of my dark years
Should lapse into, and kiss the morn again !
O wondrous Life ! O Time, and Change, and Death !
I look'd upon ye now, as one who stands
In the last days of autumn, and looks down
A vinewalk, scatter'd with the fallen leaves,
Which in the spring made arches overhead,
And gambol'd in the wind, with promise hung
Of lordly vintage, and the end of all
Sunshine, and song, and dance, and jubilee,
But not a shade of sorrow. Then I knew
That I was old ; ah ! then I had no need
To look into a mirror to be sure
My hair was white, my forehead delved with care.
I stood as one who treads a forest aisle,
Where once tall trees o'ershadow'd either side ;
They are laid low, and far away he sees

Green undergrowths, that shake their leafy sprays
 In the low light : the race that met my sight
 Was the third generation after ours :
 My brother and his mate long since were dead ;
 So was their offspring ; for they left one son,
 Who early took to wife a maid of Cos,
 And he died early ; now the widow ruled
 In the great house of Anaktoria ;
 And he too left a daughter and a son.
 I found this boy my nephew's youthful heir,
 And brought him here to see the famous land
 Of his forefathers ; his sweet sister soon
 Shall wed one worthy of her. When I saw
 The young girl stand before me, ah ! it seem'd
 To my old eyes a miracle, that wrought
 The resurrection of the loveliness
 Of Anaktoria, when first I saw her
 Step from her bark upon the Lesbian shore.
 And that dear image started forth again,
 As some old picture, thrown aside, and marr'd
 By time, and dust, and darkness, touch'd once more
 By the same hand that drew it, leaps again
 To its first life with all its colours true."

* * * * *

III

Far into the calm moonlight night they sat
 Together, and remember'd the old life
 That once was new ; when thro' the dawn of days,

They look'd, as one to the unrisen sun,
And fill'd the gold haze of futurity
With dreams, as vain as the sweet-colour'd clouds
That melt ere noonday. Now they turn'd their eyes,
And saw, in place of their imaginings
That had no life, and yet were beautiful,
Realities, once living, and now dead.
He told her of long years in some few words,
Long years, that cut their shares into the brow,
And leave no other sign to mark their course ;
Eventless changes, but, when past and gone,
No longer worth the utterance ; things to see
While passing, as one looks into a street
To mark its motions for an hour, looks on
The acts and moods of men, as in a picture,
And straight forgets ; for all the life of man
Mirror'd in memory is an evening plain
Where lesser things are drown'd in gloomy nought ;
And only a few years of pain and joy
Stand out like towers that catch the setting sun.

IV

A few days more, and in the afternoon,
Two hours ere set of sun, a step was heard
In Sappho's garden, and a well-known voice,
Beneath the porch where they in childish days
Had gambol'd, waking blithest echoes there.
"Come, Sappho, come, it is a marriage-feast

As in the days before," Alcæus said.
"O Sappho, we are changed ; but they are not,
Summer, and Winter, Life, and Death ; and so
I gather from thy garden, ere we go,
A dewy garland of young budding flowers,
That smell as sweet as the first roses did,
To wreath the brows of the young bride withal,
Thou heldest in thy hand that fateful day
That Citharus was wed ; and look, they are
The same in colour as that very morn.
These are as they were, yet, 'twixt these and them,
Our lives have pass'd, our days and hours are fallen ;
And half our memories of them, like their leaves
Shed in the dust that day, and found no more.
And yet there are twin hearts, that wait us now,
As full of blisses as these stainless flowers,
As full of hope, as were the aged ones
That hail'd us then ; come, Sappho, let us go."
Silently along the well-known walks
The two old minstrels pass'd, and arm in arm
Went forth in silence. All the earth was still ;
The western sunlight bridged the waveless sea ;
But, ere they left the garden, came the sound
Of mountain waters, rushing to the main
Heard underneath its leafy walls, a low
Melodious, friendly, old familiar voice,
Dear to their childhood, and the golden light
Danced on the waters. Sappho prest his arm,
And in a low voice musical and sad

Spoke gazing on the sunlit watercourse ;
"Cast thou thine eyes along that river-stream
That charms the valley with its voice, until
It laughs out flowers ; ah ! well I know that stream,
Ay, every bank of violets that it feeds,
And every secret of its winding course,
Up to its clear cold fountain in the hills.
For many a day, when all the town, astir
With some new pomp, was busy with its gauds,
I have been wandering on its shore alone,
And singing to myself, the low-toned chime
Of those sweet waters burthening my song.
There have I shaped, in shadow of the trees,
Blissful imaginations, and held talk
With phantoms of the Past, and thought I saw—
Like clouds that, soaring o'er far mountainpeaks,
Were pictured in the waters near me—forms
Of unborn years, and greater things to be.
Look on it, how it dances, how it flings
Its bubbles up into the light, and twines
Its silver arms about the lucent necks
Of the young lilies, and the savage roots
Of secular oaks, that joy to feel its touch ;
And lightens back the sun-flashes, and paints
The deep sky, and is soft with imagery
Of bending bowers ! now follow on its way,
Far as the opening 'twixt yon purple hills,
And mark how from the shadows it comes forth
With a dim tender light, kin to the gloom

Of the grey uplands whence it hath its spring ;
And by and by the azure, and the gold
Of the broad day are lavish'd over it.
Fresh rills flow to it, and its lisp'ing tongue
Swells to a clear glad music, and the pines
Nod o'er it, and the clouds are pictured in it,
And little billows curl upon its face.
But thou, sweet River, ere thou reach the sea,
Art doom'd to other fortunes ; hark ! the sound
That flows to us at intervals, and seems
Like the sea murmur, is the changing voice
Of peace and hope to passion and despair.
Upon the other side of this green hill,
A hundred paces ere it reach the sea,
Yonder it leaps into a howling gulph
Cumber'd, and dark with ruins of great rocks,
Splinter'd with earthquake, black with thunderbolts,
That part its lovely streams from one another,
And turn its melodies to desolate cries,
Plaints, angers, agonies ; and from its face
Sweep all the glory of the earth and heaven,
For ever rend it with tormenting pains,
Shake it with sobs, and waste in stormy tears.
No more on its torn bosom the calm face
Of sun, or moon, or star shall see itself,
Nor shadow of the leaves and soft-hued clouds
Lean, till it falls into the great salt sea.
But whither do I wander, like the stream,
In words that to thine ear seem vain and strange ?

O aged friend, it is that the gone days
Of the poor poets have been as the windings
Of that same stream 'twixt dark and bright ; and so
Have fallen into sweet vicissitudes,
And sad, and in the fairest of their course,
Under the odorous shade, and golden flowers
Of Phantasy, and in the noon of Honour,
Have been, as lightning (so the Sisters doom)
Dash'd down, and shatter'd on the pitiless edge
Of Passion.—We are tortured like soft dew,
Broken upon the crags ; and heart and mind,
That flow'd together in one harmony
Of Poesy, are rack'd and torn asunder.
For when the spirit is at war within,
The mirror of the Phantasy is crack'd,
And never more can show divine affections
Clad as the Iris when she flies from heaven
In vesture of sun-colours ; and the harp,
And voice that charm'd in the sweet early days
Can never join again. O aged friend,
'Tis that the old song of the running brook,
Its lights and shadows, and its eddies swift,
Its limpid windings, and its sudden falls,
Will tell our story better than our tongues.
And, as the mighty overhanging oak,
Or the tall pine, is but a shadow on it,
Its leafy whispers, and its summer sighs,
Its stormy voices, and its singing birds,
But lifeless images without a tongue ;

So do the great deeds of our busy lives
Live only in the pictures of the soul.
Our fiery passions that are dead and gone,
The hopes that went before, the crowning joys,
Are phantoms only to be fill'd no more.
The soul flows on for ever, as the stream ;
And, as the stream, still changes, still the same.
Behold, we stand together on this hill,
The selfsame spirits present here of old,
Our hearts transparent as the mountain spring,
Now dark with many sorrows, like the stream
Bearing down its swoln waters to the sea,
Thro' gulphy darkness hidden from the sun.
This wandering stream, born ere the firstborn man,
Eternal as the hills, as old as time,
Sang of the future to our childish ears,
As now it seems to echo all the past ;
Its murmur is the music of a life,
Its surface seems the mirror of our souls."

V

Once more together in the Hall of arms
The aged and the young. We full of years
Look'd up again to the high walls, o'erlaid
With panoplies of war ; the flow of time,
But for the care of Citharus and his spouse,
Had darken'd the old shields, and spears, and helmets,
With rusty dyes ; now once more they recall'd

The marriage banquet, and the midnight fray.
We heard a hundred voices without tongues
That now were hush'd for ever ; Sappho show'd
Where the pale girl had sign'd with her weak hand,
And slain the tyrant ; where the bloodshed flow'd
Over the marble floor ; and how the hand
Of Pittacus had drawn aside the veil
When his cry rent the darkness, and a host
Had thunder'd back their answer : all the past
Was present ; on the stage of memory all
Came back like life ; and would this marriage feast
Go before death and anguish, like the first ?
We knew not, but it seem'd that nought could stay
The merrymaking, or affright the guests,
Mixing the wine with blood ; what were we now
So full of glory then, of hope and might
With starry eyes, and dark locks ? We were there
In the dear children ; she, young Kleis, a flower
Such as the weary Sappho once had shone,
Such as her mother in the days between.
And there was he, my kinsman, second self ;
I saw his face, as 'twere my own again.
Why should we not rejoice ? Although my own
Best loved ones were no more ; although her Kleis
Long since had parted ? For we seem'd to see,
In the twain images of the far past,
As 'twere the resurrection of ourselves.
They seem'd to say, " Look on us, as we are,
Ye were ; " again we seem'd to say to them ;

“Such as we are ye shall be, when the years,
That seem so vast before ye, fleet away
In days, and hours, in minutes, and in moments,
Ev’n as a river far away is hush’d
And moveless, but, when we look down upon it,
Comes and goes by like lightning :” Young and old
A few years hence shall mingle in one sleep
To those who shall come after, as the streams
Of the same river lapse into a calm
Without a sound or motion ; if such fears,
Regrets, and yearnings tremble in man’s heart,
Such as no other life on earth can feel,
Breathe without tongues unutterable things,
Are not his sighs oracular ? Will the Gods
Be deaf to Nature’s everlasting plaint,
Nor share the immortal life with mortal men ?
What if the joyous youth, and damsel fair,
Images in the present of the past,
Be symbols of the Future ? What, if Life,
Mysterious star that dawns, we know not whence,
And lights the dim earth and its ways of grief,
And sets we know not whither, shall outlive
Day, night, and dust, and darkness ? What, if Life
Can never die, but clothes itself again,
And gives us back our beauty, as of old
Elysian youth, and joy, and peace again,
After the racking world, and throes of Time ?
“Come hither to us, little ones,” *she* said,
“And let me look into your dawning eyes,

Once more, ere mine, like setting stars, are sunk
No more to rise ; come to me, let me look
Upon your faces, if I may retrace,
As in a picture wrought by cunning hands,
In your unwrinkled aspects the sweet youth
That once was ours ; and, while I see ye, feel
One sympathetic moment of that life.
To us the only joy left in this world
Is to behold ye, as unwither'd flowers,
Last of a garden stript of summer blooms.
And, if I seem to be the thing I was
In looking on ye, haply in the days
Unborn, there shall be other gladder eyes
Of some far generation, to behold
A daughter of the ancient house again
Apparell'd for the bridal, as thou art.
Haply some yet unfashion'd tongue may say :
' If she, whose songs be in our hearts and homes,
Were standing where thou art, such would she be.
Such was her shape, her lips, her hair, her eyes,
Her stature ;' and if then the dower of song
Should bless her with a happier fate than mine,
And she should lift up a sweet voice and sing,
Haply my soul would hear it, and rejoice
To know that I was born again in her.
And if so be in other days remote
Of far-off generations other eyes
Should look upon some dark-eyed heritor
Of thy fair name, young bridegroom, and the dower

Of song should bless him, with a happier fate,
Haply some other bridal like to this
May join the two together ; and the earth
May listen to the concord of twin souls,
Giving and taking music from each other
In years to be ; which in the days of old
To us, dissever'd minstrels, was denied.
And he who sits beside me may rejoice
To see a happier self reborn in him."

VI

She paused, and for a while she bow'd her head
Upon her hand in silence ; then took up
The broken links again in solemn words,
And yet not sad. " My children, we must part ;
Yet may it be without regrets or fears.
For I would fly into the deep Unknown,
Hopeful, and glad, ev'n as the nightingale
With songs into the dark, or wandering bird
That seeks the south, and leaves all death behind.
Methinks it were a lovely thing to sit
Clad as a Bride, my grey head wreath'd with rose ;
To sit beneath a vine beside the sea,
From morn to noon, from noon to set of sun,
Talking with joyous friends, as old as I,
Talking of ventures and vicissitudes,
Fair accidents of life, and happy loves,
And merrymakings in the good old time ;

Telling quaint tales, and singing some sweet songs,
While the sea-murmur mingled with the sound.
To wait till Death should knock for me at eve ;
And when the cypress shadows, eastward thrown,
Were lengthen'd to my feet, as tho' to lay
A path for him, and a chill-breathing air
Should moan thro' the dark branches 'Come away !'
I would unlatch for him the garden gate,
And bid him enter with a smile of welcome.
And He should come, but not as he is wont,
A pitiless presence with a spear and crown,
A king unshakeable with prayers and tears,
But like a bridegroom, with a lovebright eye,
Who comes to bear away his bride at even,
And kind sweet smile ; and I would say,—' dear friend,
Come hither, but, I pray thee, in passing down
The garden-walk atween my cherish'd flowers,
Spare them, and touch them not, lest they should faint,
And hang their heads, and shed their bloom, and weep.
Come hither, and be welcome.' I would see
In parting nothing that seems sad for me.
Oh ! let my last looks see them as of old ;
Wither not one green leaf, one crimson rose ;
Steal not one diamond from the fount, nor hush
One smooth note of the blackbird's summersong.
'Come hither.' Stay a little there apart
In shadow of that pine, while I shall sing
A few brief parting notes, a last farewell.
O my beloved, we have often met

And often parted ; why should this farewell
Leave sorrow ? Often last words lightly spoken
Were pledges of glad welcomes still to be.
So let it be to-day ; but, if ye seek,
Ye shall not find me here to-morrow morn ;
But in the pleasant fields of asphodel,
Lingering to breathe eternal sweets of Spring,
Spring, that as vainly flatters my poor heart
On earth, as when its earliest breezes kiss
A trembling sere leaf of the parted year ;
Spring, that to-morrow shall fly back again
To part no more upon the swallow's wing.
Thither I go to find for us, O friends,
Some garden seats where we may sit, and hear
Each other speak as now : and so farewell.
I will provide that with the immortal Life
Of tearless Youth, and unrepining Love,
Wing'd with swift hopes, and tireless phantasies,
Something shall mingle of the days of old.
There shall be rustling leaves, and, 'twixt the stems
Of the tall trees, some azure peaks afar ;
And there shall run bright waters, with the whir
Of wings, and turtles mourning in the shade ;
And wandering ghosts should pass us by, and turn
To look on us, and stay to hear us sing ;
Farewell, dear friends, farewell ! I would untwine
Softly the roses, giving one to each,
And, taking Him my bridegroom by the hand,
Into the cypress shadows I would turn.

Then would they rise, those well-beloved guests,
And catch me by the robe, and weep, ' Ah ! no,
Say not farewell, say not that word farewell.
That word, however toned, is still an arrow
Wing'd from Despair's pale hand, though armed Time
May step between, and glance the shaft aside ;
Are we not old ? Then wherefore should we part ?
Have we not gather'd first flowers in the vale
Of Youth together, and together clomb
The thunder-shaken summits of midlife,
And downward wander'd to the other side ?
The Sun is set behind the snows of Time ;
And we are here in shade together still,
Then wherefore part ? oh ! say not thou farewell.
Wilt thou be glad in the Elysian Spring
Without us ? And shall we who look'd to thee,
As to the morning and the evening star,
Live in that darkness that comes after thee ?
We will go with thee, we will go with thee !'
Then would I take the harp into my hand
As though it were a trumpet, and would shake
The strings with notes of triumph, while the tears
Of rapture, trembling in my sunward eyes,
Should flash back the last glory of the Day ;
And Death, brought nearer as my swelling voice
Soar'd into victory, should leave his shade,
And wonder at my song ! and as the fires
Of eve were quench'd amid the purple isles,
He should put forth his wings, and we would flee

With him and the last sunlight o'er the sea,
I and mine aged friends would flee together !”

VII

She paused, and for a while she bow'd her head
Upon her hand in silence ; then took up
The sever'd links again, in solemn words,
And yet not sad ; “ My children, we must part,
And leave ye this fair world ; the time is nigh.
Yet, when it comes, be joyful, as tho' we
Pass'd on before ye through a golden gate,
Into a land where darkness is no more,
A clime of endless spring, and fadeless flowers ;
And let your last words be a true farewell.”
She gazed around, and smiled a wondrous smile.
And then she took that harp into her hand
Which just before she had but feign'd to do.
She took the harp as in the days of old,
When the gay-hearted Menon, laughter-eyed,
Joked with her at the banquet, and she sang
In pride of youth ; and with a prelude low,
And silvery-sweet as ripplets running in
To kisses of bland Zephyrus, she woke up
Her heart and voice, till they who listen'd heard
No other sound and all forgot themselves.
“ Bear with me, for I sing ye a last song ;
I sing a song of home, and happy Love.—
It is the breeze of Even curls the sea,
The tuneful wavelets ripple on the shore,

Under the shadow of his native hills,
Thro' breezy vistas cloven in the bowers.—
He sees the golden harvest hills ; the sun
Burns thro' the amber leaves against the East,
And the big bunches stooping from the roof.
He hears the murmur of the bees ; he hears
The laughter from the vineyards in the vale ;
And all things breathe into his spirit peace.
He calls unto him his sweet mate ; and she
Takes place beside him under arched rose,
Her braidless tresses flowing o'er his arm ;
And the fair children, kneeling at their knees,
Look up with eyes of hope where fear is none.
The sun sinks lower, and the winds are still,
And all things to their spirits whisper 'peace.' ”
Hark ! she lifts up her voice in the clear air,
That thrills to the swift arrows of her song ;
“ O Phosphor, sweet art thou between the peaks
Of the dark hills, that whisperest of the dawn ;
Glorious, thou daybreak, scattering off ill dreams
With shadows of the night ; divine, thou Sun,
Though old as Time creating all things new
With each new morn ; that bidd'st all things awake,
Callest forth hopes, and armest them to act ;
Callest the hunter to the field and fell ;
The fowler to greenwood, afire with song ;
The fisher to the waters deep and clear ;
The warrior with a shout and trumpet-sound ;
Part'st the young lovers striving against tears ;

And makest farewell a sweet word and a song !
The sun sinks lower, and the winds are still,
And all things to their spirits whisper 'peace.' ”
Again she tunes her tongue to softer tones,
As she looks onward to the golden west ;
“ O Hesper, blessed is thy dewy breath,
And silver star, more blessed than the morn,
Whose glory drinks up all thy tender tears,
Scatters sweet dreams, makes void the silent home,
That calls the shepherd to the mountains frore ;
That calls the fisher to the perilous seas ;
The hunter to the wildbeast and the waste ;
The warrior, or to slay, or to be slain ;
And ev'n the young child from his mother's arms,
And makes farewell a sad word and a sigh.
Thou bringest back all that the morn hath stolen,
And into welcomes turnest all farewells.
The sun is sunken, and the winds are still,
And all things to their spirits whisper 'peace.'
And now the moon shines on them, full and clear.
Still are they seated there, they have not stirr'd.
She sings no more, the children are asleep,
His voice is hush'd ; not yet the nightingale
Hath ventured on a note ; the silver light
Shines on their faces, and their moveless forms ;
Is it a living group or marble cold ?
The sun is sunken, and the winds are still,
All things have whisper'd to their spirits 'peace ! ' ”
She ceased upon that word “ peace ” as it were

The last faint ripple of a restless sea ;
And the last echo from the walls was "peace."
She held the silent harp between her arms ;
And the last glory of the setting sun
Smote on her bright and upward-glancing eye,
Ere it went down. But when the light was gone,
They look'd upon her, and her eyes were dim,
And not a motion stirr'd her ; so they rose
And coming near they saw that she was dead.
And what they look'd on now with awful eyes
Was but the ruin'd temple, whence the voice
Of Love's own oracle for all those years
Of her long life came forth in music : dead !
The Muses' home was dark and cold, and still ;
And in a moment all the gates were barr'd,
No more to be reopen'd evermore.
And what, and where was the sweet soul that moved
Therein up to that moment ? Should they mourn ?
Upon the wings of that last day of joy
Her soul had flown ; and, ever after, they
Who thought of her would first remember that
Her last word "peace," as one remembers best
The last sweet sunbeam of a winter day
Parting the clouds : her aged lips had breathed
Peace, then were hush'd for ever ; but that word
Seem'd as a charm that blest the speaker's self,
And them that heard her : something that her soul
Bore off with it in parting, something spared
Of bliss to mortal sorrows left behind.

VIII

Alcæus rose, and pass'd amid the guests
Swiftly, yet silently, his head bow'd down
And hidden in his robe, as tho' the hand
Of kingly Death held up another dart,
And beckon'd him away ; and he could hear
A voice unheard by all but him, a voice
That made him deaf to lamentation, blind
To all that changed the merriment to mourning,
Swiftly as day to darkness, when the breath
Of winter pours into the golden vales
From the icepeaks in the last autumn-days.
The tongue once hush'd, that best he loved to hear,
All tongues were silent, and the eyes that shone
Their last life-light as though it were the first,
Once closed, the sun would rise no more for him.
He wander'd forth into the twilight air
Still purple with the sunset, and stood long,
And look'd upon the sea till it was dark.
Then took his way along the starless strand
Under a night of cloud ; he took his way
Into the darkest darkness, for he knew
All winding paths among the rocks, the home
Of utter silence ; or at intervals
Listened the hoarse wind, and the moaning waves,
Until he found a place amid the gloom,
Shaped as a seat for giants, where he loved
To sit in early days, and mark the sea

Through the rent cliffs, as through a portal huge,
And hark its many voices. Now he saw
No light, but only heard the threatful swell
Of gathering winds, and waters ; with a voice
Of thunder, as a king that led them on,
The tempest roll'd on swiftly ; but amid
The tongues of the dread ministers of night,
A fearful fisher in a helmless bark,
Borne wildly by the wind, in passing by
Heard a lone cry, and saw by lightning-light
As 'twere a monarch falling from his throne,
With his right hand uplifted in his fall.
And here they found him on the morrow-morn,
The sunlight on his face, where yet a smile
Linger'd, as though that last and midnight cry,
And that uplifted hand above his head,
Had been, nor fear, nor anger, nor despair,
Nor fatal call that drew the bolt that slew him,
But a glad answer to a welcome call,
The voice of one that saw what none can see
Till the great gates unbar the loved and lost,
The cry of one who said—" I come, I come !"

NOTES

PAGE 229.

And, when the night, etc.

The game here played was the "Cottabus," a Sicilian game much in vogue at the drinking parties of young men at Athens. The simplest mode was when each threw the wine left in his cup, so as to strike against a metal basin; if all fell in the basin, and the sound was clear, it was a favourable sign. The game was played in various ways.

PAGE 276.

O sweet, softspoken Pyrrha, etc.

One of the Achillean legends is that his mother Thetis, being afraid the Trojan war would be fatal to him, disguised him as a maiden and introduced him among the daughters of Lycomedes of Scyros, where he was called by the name of Pyrrha.

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